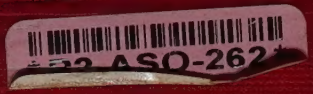
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Edmund. . . .then reopened his eyes and stood motionless with amazement.

The Count of Monte Cristo

VOL. I.
The Château D'If

BY
ALEXANDRE DUMAS

T. Nelson & Sons

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THE COUNT OF MONTE-CRISTO.

VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

MARSEILLES—THE ARRIVAL.

ON the 28th of February, 1815, the watch-tower of Notre-Dame de la Garde signalled the three-master, the *Pharaon*, from Smyrna, Trieste, and Naples.

As usual a pilot put off immediately, and rounding the Château d'If got on board the vessel between Cape Morgion and the Isle of Rion.

Immediately, and according to custom, the platform of Fort Saint-Jean was covered with lookers-on. It is always an event at Marseilles for a ship to come into port, especially when this ship, like the *Pharaon*, had been built, rigged, and laden on the stocks of the old Phocée, and belonged to an owner of the city.

The ship drew on. It had safely passed the strait which some volcanic shock has made between the Isle of Calasareigne and the Isle of Jaros, had doubled Pomègue, and approached the harbour under topsails, jib, and foresail, but so slowly and sedately that the idlers, with that instinct which misfortune sends before it, asked one another what misfortune could have happened on board. However, those experienced in naviga-

tion saw plainly that if any accident had occurred, it was not to the vessel herself, for she bore down with all the evidence of being skilfully handled, the anchor ready to be dropped, the bowsprit shrouds loose, and beside the pilot, who was steering the *Pharaon* by the narrow entrance of the port of Marseilles, was a young man, who with activity and vigilant eye, watched every motion of the ship, and repeated each direction of the pilot.

The vague disquietude which prevailed amongst the spectators had so much affected one of the crowd that he did not await the arrival of the vessel in harbour, but jumping into a small skiff, desired to be pulled alongside the *Pharaon,* which he reached as she rounded the creek of La Réserve.

When the young man on board saw this individual approach, he left his station by the pilot, and came, hat in hand, to the side of the ship's bulwarks.

He was a fine tall slim young fellow, with black eyes, and hair as dark as the raven's wing, and his whole appearance bespoke that calmness and resolution peculiar to men accustomed from their cradle to contend with danger.

"Ah! is it you, Dantès?" cried the man in the skiff. "What's the matter, and why have you such an air of sadness aboard?"

"A great misfortune, M. Morrel!" replied the young man—"a great misfortune, for me especially. Off Civita Vecchia we lost our brave Captain Leclere."

"And the cargo?" inquired the owner eagerly.

"Is all safe, M. Morrel; and I think you will be satisfied on that head. But poor Captain Leclere——"

"What happened to him?" asked the owner, with an air of considerable resignation. "What happened to the worthy captain?"

"He died."

"Fell into the sea?"

"No, sir; he died of the brain fever in dreadful agony." Then turning to the crew, he said,—

"Look out there! All ready to drop anchor!"

All hands obeyed. At the same moment the eight or ten seamen, who composed the crew, sprang, some to the main-sheets, others to the braces, others to the halyards, others to the jib-ropes, and others to the topsail brails.

The young sailor gave a look to see his orders were promptly and accurately obeyed, and then turned again to the owner.

"And how did this misfortune occur?" inquired he, resuming the inquiry suspended for a moment.

"Alas, sir, in the most unexpected manner. After a long conversation with the harbour-master, Captain Leclere left Naples greatly disturbed in his mind. At the end of twenty-four hours he was attacked by a fever, and died three days afterwards. We performed the usual burial service, and he is at his rest, sewn up in his hammock, with two bullets of thirty-six pounds each at his head and heels, off the island of El Giglio. We bring to his widow his sword and cross of honour. It was worth while, truly," added the young man, with a melancholy smile, "to make war against the English for ten years, and to die in his bed at last, like everybody else."

"Why, you see, Edmond," replied the owner, who appeared more comforted at every moment, "we are all mortal, and the old must make way for the young. If not, why there would be no promotion; and as you have assured me that the cargo——"

"Is all safe and sound, M. Morrel, take my word for it; and I advise you not to take £1,000 for the profits of the voyage."

Then, as they were just passing the Round Tower, the young man shouted out, "Ready, there, to lower topsails, foresail, and jib!"

The order was executed as promptly as if on board a man-of-war.

"Let go, and brail all!"

At this last word all the sails were lowered, and the bark moved almost imperceptibly onwards.

"Now, if you will come on board, M. Morrel," said Dantès, observing the owner's impatience, "here is your supercargo, M. Danglars, coming out of his cabin, who will furnish you with every particular. As for me, I must look after the anchoring, and dress the ship in mourning."

The owner did not wait to be twice invited. He seized a rope which Dantès flung to him, and with an activity that would have done credit to a sailor, climbed up the side of the ship, whilst the young man, going to his task, left the conversation to the individual whom he had announced under the name of Danglars, who now came towards the owner. He was a man of twenty-five or twenty-six years of age, of unprepossessing countenance, obsequious to his superiors, insolent to his inferiors; and then, besides his position as responsible agent on board, which is always obnoxious to the sailors, he was as much disliked by the crew as Edmond Dantès was beloved by them.

"Well, M. Morrel," said Danglars, "you have heard of the misfortune that has befallen us?"

"Yes—yes! Poor Captain Leclere! He was a brave and an honest man."

"And a first-rate seaman, grown old between sky and ocean, as should a man charged with the interests of a house so important as that of Morrel and Son," replied Danglars.

"But," replied the owner, following with his look Dantès, who was watching the anchoring of his vessel, "it seems to me that a sailor needs not to be so old as you say, Danglars, to understand his business, for our friend Edmond seems to understand it thoroughly, and not to require instruction from any one."

"Yes," said Danglars, casting towards Edmond a look in which a feeling of envy was strongly visible—"yes, he is young, and youth is invariably self-confident.

Scarcely was the captain's breath out of his body than he assumed the command without consulting any one, and he caused us to lose a day and a half at the Isle of Elba, instead of making for Marseilles direct."

"As to taking the command of the vessel," replied Morrel, "that was his duty as captain's mate; as to losing a day and a half off the Isle of Elba he was wrong, unless the ship wanted some repair."

"The ship was as well as I am, and as, I hope, you are, M. Morrel, and this day and a half was lost from pure whim, for the pleasure of going ashore, and nothing else."

"Dantès," said the shipowner, turning towards the young man, "come this way."

"In a moment, sir," answered Dantès, "and I'm with you." Then, calling to the crew, he said,—

"Let go!"

The anchor was instantly dropped, and the chain ran rattling through the porthole. Dantès continued at his post, in spite of the presence of the pilot, until this manœuvre was completed, and then he added, "Lower the pennant half-mast high, put the ensign in a weft, and slope the yards."

"You see," said Danglars, "he fancies himself captain already, upon my word."

"And so, in fact, he is," said the owner.

"Except your signature and your partner's, M. Morrel."

"And why should he not have this?" asked the owner. "He is young, it is true, but he seems to me a thorough seaman, and of full experience."

A cloud passed over Danglars's brow.

"Your pardon, M. Morrel," said Dantès, approaching; "the ship now rides at anchor, and I am at your service. You hailed me, I think?"

Danglars retreated a step or two.

"I wished to inquire why you stopped at the Isle of Elba."

"I do not know, sir. It was to fulfil a last instruction of Captain Leclere, who, when dying, gave me a packet for the Maréchal Bertrand."

"Then did you see him, Edmond?"

"Who?"

"The maréchal."

"Yes."

Morrel looked around him, and then, drawing Dantès on one side, he said suddenly,—

"And how is the emperor?"

"Very well, as far as I could judge from my eyes."

"You saw the emperor, then?"

"He entered the maréchal's apartment whilst I was there."

"And you spoke to him?"

"Why, it was he who spoke to me, sir," said Dantès, with a smile.

"And what did he say to you?"

"Asked me questions about the ship, the time it left Marseilles, the course she had taken, and what was her cargo. I believe, if she had not been laden, and I had been master, he would have bought her. But I told him I was only mate, and that she belonged to the firm of Morrel and Son. 'Ah! ah!' he said, 'I know them. The Morrels have been shipowners from father to son; and there was a Morrel who served in the same regiment with me when I was in garrison at Valence.'"

"*Pardieu!* and that is true!" cried the owner, greatly delighted. "And that was Policar Morrel, my uncle, who was afterwards a captain. Dantès, you must tell my uncle that the emperor remembered him, and you will see it will bring tears into the old soldier's eyes. Come, come!" continued he, patting Edmond's shoulder kindly. "You did very right, Dantès, to follow Captain Leclere's instruction, and touch at the Isle of Elba; although if it were known that you had conveyed a packet to the maréchal and had conversed with the emperor it might bring you into trouble."

"How could that bring me into trouble, sir?" asked Dantès, "for I did not even know of what I was the bearer, and the emperor merely made such inquiries as he would of the first comer. But your pardon; here are the officers of health and the customs coming alongside," and the young man went to the gangway. As he departed Danglars approached and said,—

"Well, it appears that he has given you satisfactory reasons for his landing at Porto-Ferrajo."

"Yes, most satisfactory, my dear Danglars."

"Well, so much the better," said the supercargo, "for it is always painful to see a comrade who does not do his duty."

"Dantès has done his," replied the owner, "and that is not saying much. It was Captain Leclere who gave orders for this delay."

"Talking of Captain Leclere, has not Dantès given you a letter from him?"

"To me? No; was there one?"

"I believe that, besides the packet, Captain Leclere had confided a letter to his care."

"Of what packet are you speaking, Danglars?"

"Why, that which Dantès left at Porto-Ferrajo."

"How do you know he had a packet to leave at Porto-Ferrajo?"

Danglars turned very red.

"I was passing close to the door of the captain's cabin, which was half open, and I saw him give the packet and letter to Dantès."

"He did not speak to me of it," replied the shipowner; "but if there be any letter, he will give it to me."

Danglars reflected for a moment.

"Then, M. Morrel, I beg of you," said he, "not to say a word to Dantès on the subject; I may have been mistaken."

At this moment the young man returned, and Danglars retreated as before.

"Well, my dear Dantès, are you now free?" inquired the owner.

"Yes, sir."

"You have not been long detained."

"No. I gave the custom-house officers a copy of our bill of lading, and as to the other papers, they sent a man off with the pilot, to whom I gave them."

"Then you have nothing more to do here?"

"No; all is arranged now."

"Then you can come and dine with me?"

"Excuse me, M. Morrel—excuse me, if you please; but my first visit is due to my father, though I am not the less grateful for the honour you have done me."

"Right, Dantès, quite right. I always knew you were a good son."

"And," inquired Dantès with some hesitation, "do you know how my father is?"

"Well, I believe, my dear Edmond, although I have not seen him lately."

"Yes, he likes to keep himself shut up in his little room."

"That proves, at least, that he has wanted for nothing during your absence."

Dantès smiled.

"My father is proud, sir; and if he had not a meal left, I doubt if he would have asked anything from any one, except God."

"Well, then, after this first visit has been made we rely on you."

"I must again excuse myself, M. Morrel, for after this first visit has been paid I have another which I am most anxious to pay."

"True, Dantès, I forgot that there was at the Catalans some one who expects you no less impatiently than your father—the lovely Mercédès."

Dantès blushed.

"Ah, ah!" said the shipowner, "that does not

astonish me, for she has been to me three times, inquiring if there were any news of the *Pharaon*. *Peste!* Edmond, you have a very handsome mistress."

"She is not my mistress," replied the young sailor gravely; "she is my betrothed."

"Sometimes one and the same thing," said Morrel, with a smile.

"Not with us, sir," replied Dantès.

"Well, well, my dear Edmond," continued the owner, "do not let me detain you. You have managed my affairs so well that I ought to allow you all the time you require for your own. Do you want any money?"

"No, sir. I have all my pay to take—nearly three months' wages."

"You are a careful fellow, Edmond."

"Say I have a poor father, sir."

"Yes, yes, I know how good a son you are; so now haste away to see your father. I have a son too, and I should be very wroth with those who detained him from me after a three months' voyage."

"Then I have your leave, sir?"

"Yes, if you have nothing more to say to me."

"Nothing."

"Captain Leclere did not, before he died, give you a letter for me?"

"He was unable to write, sir. But that reminds me that I must ask your leave of absence for some days."

"To get married?"

"Yes, first, and then to go to Paris."

"Very good. Have what time you require, Dantès. It will take quite six weeks to unload the cargo, and we cannot get you ready for sea until three months after that; only be back again in three months, for the *Pharaon*," added the owner, patting the young sailor on the back, "cannot sail without her captain."

"Without her captain!" cried Dantès, his eyes sparkling with animation. "Pray mind what you say, for you are touching on the most secret wishes of my heart.

Is it really your intention to nominate me captain of the *Pharaon?*"

"If I were sole owner I would nominate you this moment, my dear Dantès, and say it is settled; but I have a partner, and you know the Italian proverb, *Che a compagno a padrone*—'He who has a partner has a master.' But the thing is at least half done, as you have one out of two voices. Rely on me to procure you the other; I will do my best."

"Ah, M. Morrel," exclaimed the young seaman, with tears in his eyes, and grasping the owner's hand—"M. Morrel, I thank you in the name of my father and of Mercédès."

"Good—good, Edmond! There's a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft that keeps a good watch for good fellows! Go to your father; go and see Mercédès, and come to me afterwards."

"Shall I row you on shore?"

"No, I thank you; I shall remain and look over the accounts with Danglars. Have you been satisfied with him this voyage?"

"That is according to the sense you attach to the question, sir. Do you mean he is a good comrade? No, for I think he never liked me since the day when I was silly enough, after a little quarrel we had, to propose to him to stop for ten minutes at the Isle of Monte-Cristo to settle the dispute, a proposition which I was wrong to suggest, and he quite right to refuse. If you mean as responsible agent that you ask me the question, I believe there is nothing to say against him, and that you will be content with the way in which he has performed his duty."

"But tell me, Dantès, if you had the command of the *Pharaon*, should you have pleasure in retaining Danglars?"

"Captain or mate, M. Morrel," replied Dantès, "I shall always have the greatest respect for those who possess our owners' confidence."

"Good—good, Dantès! I see you are a thorough good fellow, and will detain you no longer. Go, for I see how impatient you are."

"Then I have leave?"

"Go, I tell you."

"May I have the use of your skiff?"

"Certainly."

"Then for the present, M. Morrel, farewell, and a thousand thanks."

"I hope soon to see you again, my dear Edmond. Good luck to you."

The young sailor jumped into the skiff, and sat down in the stern, desiring to be put ashore at the Canebière. The two rowers bent to their work, and the little boat glided away as rapidly as possible in the midst of the thousand vessels which choke up the narrow way which leads between the two rows of ships from the mouth of the harbour to the Quai d'Orléans.

CHAPTER II.

FATHER AND SON.

We will leave Danglars struggling with the feelings of hatred, and endeavouring to insinuate in the ear of the shipowner Morrel some evil suspicions against his comrade, and follow Dantès, who, after having traversed the Canebière, took the Rue de Noailles, and entering into a small house, situated on the left side of the Allées de Meillan, rapidly ascended four stories of a dark staircase, holding the baluster in his hand, whilst with the other he repressed the beatings of his heart, and paused before a half-opened door which revealed all the interior of a small compartment.

This apartment was occupied by Dantès's father.

The news of the arrival of the *Pharaon* had not yet

reached the old man, who, mounted on a chair, was amusing himself with staking some nasturtiums with tremulous hand, which, mingled with clematis, formed a kind of trellis at his window.

Suddenly he felt an arm thrown round his body, and a well-known voice behind him exclaimed, "Father, dear father!"

The old man uttered a cry, and turned round; then, seeing his son, he fell into his arms, pale and trembling.

"What ails you, my dearest father? Are you ill?" inquired the young man, much alarmed.

"No, no, my dear Edmond—my boy—my son! No; but I did not expect you; and joy, the surprise of seeing you so suddenly—Ah! I really seem as if I were going to die!"

"Come, come, cheer up, my dear father. 'Tis I—really I. They say joy never hurts, and so I come to you without any warning. Come now, look cheerfully at me, instead of gazing as you do with your eyes so wide. Here I am back again, and we will now be happy."

"Yes, yes, my boy, so we will—so we will," replied the old man. "But how shall we be happy? Will you never leave me again? Come, tell me all the good fortune that has befallen you."

"God forgive me," said the young man, "for rejoicing at happiness derived from the misery of others; but Heaven knows I did not seek this good fortune. It has happened, and I really cannot affect to lament it. The good Captain Leclere is dead, father, and it is probable that, with the aid of M. Morrel, I shall have his place. Do you understand, father? Only imagine me a captain at twenty, with a hundred louis pay, and a share in the profits! Is this not more than a poor sailor like me could have hoped for?"

"Yes, my dear boy," replied the old man, "and much more than you could have expected."

"Well, then, with the first money I touch I mean you

to have a small house, with a garden to plant your clematis, your nasturtiums, and your honeysuckles. But what ails you, father? Are not you well?"

"'Tis nothing—nothing; it will soon pass away," and as he said so, the old man's strength failed him, and he fell backwards.

"Come, come," said the young man; "a glass of wine, father, will revive you. Where do you keep your wine?"

"No, no; thank ye. You need not look for it; I do not want it," said the old man.

"Yes, yes, father; tell me where it is," and he opened two or three cupboards.

"It is no use," said the old man; "there is no wine."

"What, no wine?" said Dantès, turning pale, and looking alternately at the hollow cheeks of the old man and the empty cupboards. "What, no wine? Have you wanted money, father?"

"I want nothing since I see you," said the old man.

"Yet," stammered Dantès, wiping the perspiration from his brow—"yet I gave you two hundred francs when I left three months ago."

"Yes, yes, Edmond, that is true; but you forgot at that time a little debt to our neighbour, Caderousse. He reminded me of it, telling me if I did not pay for you, he would be paid by M. Morrel; and so, you see, lest he might do you an injury——"

"Well?"

"Why, I paid him."

"But," cried Dantès, "it was a hundred and forty francs I owed Caderousse."

"Yes," stammered the old man.

"And you paid him out of the two hundred francs I left you?"

The old man made a sign in the affirmative.

"So that you have lived for three months on sixty francs?" muttered the young man.

"You know how little I require," said the old man.

"Heaven pardon me," cried Edmond, going on his knees before the old man.

"What are you doing?"

"You have wounded my very heart."

"Never mind it, for I see you once more," said the old man; "and now all is forgotten, all is well again."

"Yes, here I am," said the young man, "with a happy prospect and a little money. Here, father, here!" he said, "take this—take it, and send for something immediately."

And he emptied his pockets on the table, whose contents consisted of a dozen pieces of gold, five or six crowns, and some smaller coin.

The countenance of old Dantès brightened.

"Whom does this belong to?" he inquired.

"To me—to you—to us! Take it; buy some provisions; be happy, and to-morrow we shall have more."

"Gently, gently," said the old man, with a smile; "and by your leave I will use your purse moderately, for they would say, if they saw me buy too many things at a time, that I had been obliged to await your return, in order to be able to purchase them."

"Do as you please; but, first of all, pray have a servant, father. I will not have you left alone so long. I have some smuggled coffee and most capital tobacco in a small chest in the hold which you shall have to-morrow. But, hush, here comes somebody."

"'Tis Caderousse, who has heard of your arrival, and, no doubt, comes to congratulate you on your fortunate return."

"Ah, lips that say one thing, whilst the heart thinks another," murmured Edmond. "But, never mind; he is a neighbour who has done us a service on a time, so he's welcome."

As Edmond finished his sentence in a low voice, there appeared at the door the black and shock head of Caderousse. He was a man of twenty-five or twenty-six years of age, and held in his hand a morsel of cloth,

which, in his capacity as a tailor, he was about to turn into the lining of a coat.

"What! is it you, Edmond, returned?" said he, with a broad Marseillaise accent, and a grin that displayed his teeth as white as ivory.

"Yes, as you see, neighbour Caderousse; and ready to be agreeable to you in any and every way," replied Dantès, but ill concealing his feeling under this appearance of civility.

"Thanks, thanks; but fortunately I do not want for anything; and it chances that at times there are others who have need of me."—Dantès made a gesture.—"I do not allude to you, my boy. No, no! I lent you money, and you returned it; that's like good neighbours, and we are quits."

"We are never quits with those who oblige us," was Dantès's reply; "for when we do not owe them money, we owe them gratitude."

"What's the use of mentioning that? What is done is done. Let us talk of your happy return, my boy. I had gone on the quay to match a piece of mulberry cloth, when I met friend Danglars.

"'What; you at Marseilles?'

"'Yes,' says he.

"'I thought you were at Smyrna.'

"'I was; but am now back again.'

"'And where is the dear boy, our little Edmond?'

"'Why, with his father, no doubt,' replied Danglars. And so I came," added Caderousse, "as fast as I could to have the pleasure of shaking hands with a friend."

"Worthy Caderousse!" said the old man; "he is so much attached to us."

"Yes, to be sure I am. I love and esteem you, because honest folks are so rare! But it seems you have come back rich, my boy." continued the tailor, looking askance at the handful of gold and silver which Dantès had thrown on the table.

The young man remarked the greedy glance which shone in the dark eyes of his neighbour.

"Eh!" he said negligently, "this money is not mine. I was expressing to my father my fears that he had wanted many things in my absence, and to convince me he emptied his purse on the table.—Come, father," added Dantès, "put this money back in your box, unless neighbour Caderousse wants anything, and in that case it is at his service."

"No, my boy, no," said Caderousse, "I am not in any want, thank God! the state nourishes me. Keep your money—keep it, I say—one never has too much; but at the same time, my boy, I am as much obliged by your offer as if I took advantage of it."

"It was offered with good will," said Dantès.

"No doubt, my boy—no doubt. Well, you stand well with M. Morrel, I hear, you insinuating dog, you."

"M. Morrel has always been exceedingly kind to me," replied Dantès.

"Then you were wrong to refuse to dine with him."

"What, did you refuse to dine with him?" said old Dantès; "and did he invite you to dine?"

"Yes, my dear father," replied Edmond, smiling at his father's astonishment at the excessive honour paid to his son.

"And why did you refuse, my son?" inquired the old man.

"That I might the sooner see you again, my dear father," replied the young man. "I was most anxious to see you."

"But it must have vexed M. Morrel, good, worthy man," said Caderousse. "And when you are looking forward to be captain, it was wrong to annoy the owner."

"But I explained to him the cause of my refusal," replied Dantès; "and I hope he fully understood it."

"Yes, but to be captain one must give way a little to one's patrons."

"I hope to be captain without that," said Dantès.

"So much the better—so much the better! Nothing will give greater pleasure to all your old friends; and I know one down there behind the citadel of Saint Nicolas who will not be sorry to hear it."

"Mercédès?" said the old man.

"Yes, my dear father, and with your permission, now I have seen you, and know you are well, and have all you require, I will ask your consent to go and pay a visit to the Catalans."

"Go, my dear boy," said old Dantès; "and Heaven bless you in your wife, as it has blessed me, my son!"

"His wife!" said Caderousse; "why, how fast you go on, father Dantès! She is not his wife yet, it appears."

"No; but according to all probability she soon will be," replied Edmond.

"Yes, yes," said Caderousse; "but you were right to return as soon as possible, my boy."

"And why?"

"Because Mercédès is a very fine girl, and fine girls never lack lovers; she, particularly, has them by dozens."

"Really?" answered Edmond, with a smile which had in it traces of slight uneasiness.

"Ah, yes," continued Caderousse, "and capital offers too; but you know you will be captain, and who could refuse you then?"

"Meaning to say," replied Dantès, with a smile which ill concealed his trouble, "that if I were not a captain——"

"Eh, eh!" said Caderousse, shaking his head.

"Come, come," said the sailor; "I have a better opinion than you of women in general, and of Mercédès in particular; and I am certain that, captain or not, she will remain ever faithful to me."

"So much the better—so much the better," said Caderousse. "When one is going to be married, there is nothing like implicit confidence; but never mind that, my boy, but go and announce your arrival, and let her know all your hopes and prospects."

"I will go directly," was Edmond's reply; and, embracing his father and saluting Caderousse, he left the apartment.

Caderousse lingered for a moment; then taking leave of old Dantès, he went downstairs to rejoin Danglars, who awaited him at the corner of the Rue Senac.

"Well," said Danglars, "did you see him?"

"I have just left him," answered Caderousse.

"Did he allude to his hope of being captain?"

"He spoke of it as a thing already decided."

"Patience!" said Danglars. "He is in too much hurry it appears to me."

"Why, it seems M. Morrel has promised him the thing."

"So that he is quite elate about it."

"That is to say, he is actually insolent on the matter—has already offered me his patronage, as if he were a grand personage, and proffered me a loan of money, as though he were a banker."

"Which you refused."

"Most assuredly, although I might easily have accepted, for it was I who put into his hands the first silver he ever earned. But now M. Dantès has no longer any occasion for assistance; he is about to become a captain."

"Pooh!" said Danglars, "he is not one yet."

"*Ma foi!* and it will be as well he never should be," answered Caderousse; "for if he should be, there will be really no speaking to him."

"If we choose," replied Danglars, "he will remain what he is, and perhaps become even less than he is."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing; I was speaking to myself. And is he still in love with the Catalane?"

"Over head and ears; but unless I am much mistaken, there will be a storm in that quarter."

"Explain yourself."

"Why should I?"

"It is more important than you think, perhaps. You do not love Dantès?"

"I never like upstarts."

"Then tell me all you know relative to the Catalane."

"I know nothing for certain; only I have seen things which induce me to believe, as I told you, that the future captain will find some annoyance in the environs of the Vieilles Infirmeries."

"What do you know? Come, tell me!"

"Well, every time I have seen Mercédès come into the city she has been accompanied by a tall strapping black-eyed Catalan, with a red complexion, brown skin, and fierce air, whom she calls cousin."

"Really; and do you think this cousin pays her attentions?"

"I only suppose so. What else can a strapping chap of twenty-one mean with a fine wench of seventeen?"

"And you say Dantès has gone to the Catalans?"

"He went before I came down."

"Let us go the same way. We will stop at La Réserve and we can drink a glass of La Malgue whilst we wait for news."

"Come along," said Caderousse; "but mind you pay the shot."

"Certainly," replied Danglars; and going quickly to the spot alluded to, they called for a bottle of wine and two glasses.

Père Pamphile had seen Dantès pass not ten minutes before; and assured that he was at the Catalans, they sat down under the budding foliage of the planes and sycamores, in the branches of which the birds were joyously singing on a lovely day in early spring.

CHAPTER III.

THE CATALANS.

About a hundred paces from the spot where the two friends were, with their looks fixed on the distance, and their ears attentive, whilst they imbibed the sparkling wine of La Malgue, behind a bare and torn and weather-worn wall, was the small village of the Catalans.

Our readers will follow us along the only street of this little village, and enter with us into one of the houses, on the outside of which the sun had stamped that beautiful colour of the dead leaf peculiar to the buildings of the country, and within a coat of limewash of that white tint which forms the only ornament of Spanish posadas.

A young and beautiful girl, with hair as black as jet, her eyes as velvety as the gazelle's, was leaning with her back against the wainscot, rubbing in her slender fingers, moulded after the antique, a bunch of heath-blossoms, the flowers of which she was picking off and strewing on the floor; her arms bare to the elbow, embrowned, and resembling those of the Venus at Arles, moved with a kind of restless impatience, and she tapped the earth with her pliant and well-formed foot so as to display the pure and full shape of her well-turned leg in its red cotton stocking with gray and blue clocks.

At three paces from her, seated in a chair which he balanced on two legs, leaning his elbow on an old worm-eaten table, was a tall young man of twenty or two-and-twenty, who was looking at her with an air in which vexation and uneasiness were mingled. He questioned her with his eyes, but the firm and steady gaze of the young girl controlled his look.

"You see, Mercédès," said the young man, "here is Easter come round again; tell me, is this the moment for a wedding?"

"I have answered you a hundred times, Fernand, and really you must be your own enemy to ask me again."

"Well, repeat it—repeat it, I beg of you, that I may at last believe it. Tell me for the hundredth time that you refuse my love, which had your mother's sanction. Make me fully comprehend that you are trifling with my happiness, that my life or death are immaterial to you. Ah, to have dreamed for ten years of being your husband, Mercédès, and to lose that hope, which was the only stay of my existence!"

"At least it was not I who ever encouraged you in that shape, Fernand," replied Mercédès; "you cannot reproach me with the slightest coquetry. I have always said to you I love you as a brother; but do not ask from me more than sisterly affection, for my heart is another's. Is not this true, Fernand?"

"Yes, I know it well, Mercédès," replied the young man. "Yes, you have been cruelly frank with me; but do you forget that it is among the Catalans a sacred law to intermarry?"

"You mistake, Fernand, it is not a law, but merely a custom; and I pray of you, do not cite this custom in your favour. You are included in the conscription, Fernand, and are only at liberty on sufferance, liable at any moment to be called upon to take up arms."

"But, Mercédès," said Fernand, "beloved by you, I would tempt fortune; you would bring me good luck, and I should become rich. I could extend my occupation as a fisherman, might get a place as clerk in a warehouse, and become myself a dealer in time."

"You could do no such thing, Fernand; you are a soldier, and if you remain at the Catalans it is because there is not a war. So remain a fisherman, and contented with my friendshp, as I cannot give you more."

"Well, you are right, Mercédès. I will be a sailor; instead of the costume of our fathers, which you despise,

I will wear a varnished hat, a striped shirt, and a blue jacket with an anchor on the buttons. Would not that dress please you?"

"What do you mean?" asked Mercédès, darting at him an angry glance—"what do you mean? I do not understand you."

"I mean, Mercédès, that you are thus harsh and cruel with me because you are expecting some one who is thus attired; but, perhaps, he you await is inconstant, or, if he is not, the sea is so to him."

"Fernand," cried Mercédès, "I believed you were good hearted, and I was mistaken! Fernand, you are wicked to call to your aid jealousy and the anger of God. Yes, I will not deny it, I do await, and I do love him to whom you allude; and, if he does not return, instead of accusing him of the inconstancy which you insinuate, I will tell you that he died loving me and me only."

The young Catalan made a gesture of rage.

"I understand you, Fernand; you would be revenged on him because I do not love you; you would cross your Catalan knife with his dirk. What end would that answer? To lose you my friendship if he were conquered, and see that friendship changed into hate if you were conqueror. Believe me, to seek a quarrel with a man is a bad method of pleasing the woman who loves that man. No, Fernand, you will not thus give way to evil thoughts. Unable to have me for your wife, you will content yourself with having me for your friend and sister; and besides," she added, her eyes troubled and moistened with tears, "wait—wait, Fernand; you said just now that the sea was treacherous, and he has been gone four months, and during these four months we have had some terrible storms."

Fernand made no reply, nor did he attempt to check the tears which flowed down the cheeks of Mercédès, although for each of these tears he would have shed his heart's blood; but these tears flowed for another. He arose, paced awhile up and down the hut, and then,

suddenly stopping before Mercédès, with his eyes glowing and his hands clenched,—

"Say, Mercédès," he said, "once for all, is this your final determination?"

"I love Edmond Dantès," the young girl calmly replied, "and none but Edmond shall ever be my husband."

"And you will always love him?"

"As long as I live."

Fernand let fall his head like a defeated man, heaved a sigh which resembled a groan, and then, suddenly looking her full in the face, with clenched teeth and expanded nostrils, said,—

"But if he is dead——"

"If he is dead, I shall die too."

"If he has forgotten you——"

"Mercédès!" cried a voice joyously, outside the house, "Mercédès!"

"Ah!" exclaimed the young girl, blushing with delight, and springing up with love, "you see he has not forgotten me, for here he is!" And, rushing towards the door, she opened it, saying, "Here, Edmond, here I am!"

Fernand, pale and trembling, receded like a traveller at the sight of a serpent, and fell into a chair beside him.

Edmond and Mercédès were clasped in each other's arms. The burning sun of Marseilles, which penetrated the room by the open door, covered them with a flood of light. At first they saw nothing around them. Their intense happiness isolated them from all the rest of the world, and they only spoke in broken words, which are tokens of a joy so extreme that they seem rather the expression of sorrow.

Suddenly Edmond saw the gloomy countenance of Fernand, as it was defined in the shadow, pale and threatening, and by a movement, for which he could scarcely account to himself, the young Catalan placed his hands on the knife at his belt.

"Ah, your pardon," said Dantès, frowning in his turn. "I did not perceive that there were three of us." Then, turning to Mercédès, he inquired, "Who is this gentleman?"

"One who will be your best friend, Dantès, for he is my friend, my cousin, my brother. It is Fernand, the man whom, after you, Edmond, I love the most in the world. Do you not remember him?"

"Yes!" said Edmond, and without relinquishing Mercédès's hand, clasped in one of his own, he extended the other to the Catalan with a cordial air.

But Fernand, instead of responding to this amicable gesture, remained mute and trembling.

Edmond then cast his eyes scrutinizingly at Mercédès, agitated and embarrassed, and then again on Fernand, gloomy and menacing.

This look told him all, and his brow became suffused and angry.

"I did not know, when I came with such haste to you, that I was to meet an enemy here."

"An enemy!" cried Mercédès, with an angry look at her cousin. "An enemy in my house, do you say, Edmond! If I believed that, I would place my arm under yours and go with you to Marseilles, leaving the house to return to it no more."

Fernand's eye darted lightning.

"And should any misfortune occur to you, dear Edmond," she continued, with the same calmness, which proved to Fernand that the young girl had read the very innermost depths of his sinister thought—"if misfortune should occur to you, I would ascend the highest point of the Cape de Morgion, and cast myself headlong from it."

Fernand became deadly pale.

"But you are deceived, Edmond," she continued. "You have no enemy here. There is no one but Fernand, my brother, who will grasp your hand as a devoted friend."

And at these words the young girl fixed her imperious

look on the Catalan, who, as if fascinated by it, came slowly towards Edmond, and offered him his hand.

His hatred, like a powerless though furious wave, was broken against the strong ascendency which Mercédès exercised over him.

Scarcely, however, had he touched Edmond's hand than he felt he had done all he could do, and rushed hastily out of the house.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, running furiously and tearing his hair—"oh, who will deliver me from this man? Wretched, wretched that I am!"

"Hallo, Catalan! Hallo, Fernand, where are you running to?" exclaimed a voice.

The young man stopped suddenly, looked around him, and perceived Caderousse sitting at table with Danglars under an arbour.

"Well," said Caderousse, "why don't you come? Are you really in such a hurry that you have not time to say 'how do' to your friends?"

"Particularly when they have still a full bottle before them," added Danglars.

Fernand looked at them both with a stupefied air, but did not say a word.

"He seems besotted," said Danglars, pushing Caderousse with his knee. "Are we mistaken, and is Dantès triumphant in spite of all we have believed?"

"Why, we must inquire into that," was Caderousse's reply, and turning towards the young man, said, "Well, Catalan, can't you make up your mind?"

Fernand wiped away the perspiration steaming from his brow, and slowly entered the arbour, whose shade seemed to restore somewhat of calmness to his senses, and whose coolness somewhat of refreshment to his exhausted body.

"Good-day," said he. "You called me, didn't you?" And he fell rather than sat down on one of the seats which surrounded the table.

"I called you because you were running like a mad-

man; and I was afraid you would throw yourself into the sea," said Caderousse laughingly. "Why, when a man has friends, they are not only to offer him a glass of wine, but, moreover, to prevent his swallowing three or four pints of water unnecessarily!"

Fernand gave a groan, which resembled a sob, and dropped his head into his hands, his elbows leaning on the table.

"Well, Fernand, I must say," said Caderousse, beginning the conversation, with that brutality of the common people, in which curiosity destroys all diplomacy, "you look uncommonly like a rejected lover," and he burst into a hoarse laugh.

"Bah!" said Danglars, "a lad of his make was not born to be unhappy in love. You are laughing at him, Caderousse."

"No," he replied, "only hark how he sighs! Come, come, Fernand," said Caderousse, "hold up your head and answer us. It's not polite not to reply to friends who ask news of your health."

"My health is well enough," said Fernand, clenching his hands without raising his head.

"Ah, you see, Danglars," said Caderousse, winking at his friend, "this it is—Fernand whom you see here is a good and brave Catalan, one of the best fishermen in Marseilles, and he is in love with a very fine girl, named Mercédès; but it appears, unfortunately, that the fine girl is in love with the second in command on board the *Pharaon*; and, as the *Pharaon* arrived to-day—why, you understand!"

"No, I do not understand," said Danglars.

"Poor Fernand has been dismissed," continued Caderousse.

"Well, and what then?" said Fernand, lifting up his head, and looking at Caderousse like a man who looks for some one on whom to vent his anger. "Mercédès is not accountable to any person, is she? Is she not free to love whomsoever she will?"

"Oh, if you take it in that sense," said Caderousse, "it is another thing. But I thought you were a Catalan, and they told me the Catalans were not men to allow themselves to be supplanted by a rival. It was even told me that Fernand especially was terrible in his vengeance."

Fernand smiled piteously. "A lover is never terrible," he said.

"Poor fellow!" remarked Danglars, affecting to pity the young man from the bottom of his heart. "Why, you see, he did not expect to see Dantès return so suddenly. He thought he was dead, perhaps, or, perchance, faithless. These things always come on us more severely when they come suddenly."

"Ah, *ma foi*, under any circumstances," said Caderousse, who drank as he spoke, and on whom the fumes of the wine of La Malgue began to take effect—"under any circumstances, Fernand is not the only person put out by the fortunate arrival of Dantès: is he, Danglars?"

"No, you are right; and I should say that would bring him ill luck."

"Well, never mind," answered Caderousse, pouring out a glass of wine for Fernand, and filling his own for the eighth or ninth time, whilst Danglars had merely sipped his. "Never mind; in the meantime he marries Mercédès—the lovely Mercédès—at least, he returns to do that."

During this time Danglars fixed his piercing glance on the young man, on whose heart Caderousse's words fell like molten lead.

"And when is the wedding to be?" he asked.

"Oh, it is not yet fixed," murmured Fernand.

"No, but it will be," said Caderousse, "as surely as Dantès will be captain of the *Pharaon*—eh, Danglars?"

Danglars shuddered at this unexpected attack, and turned to Caderousse, whose countenance he scrutinized to try and detect whether the blow was premeditated;

but he read nothing but envy in a countenance already rendered brutal and stupid by drunkenness.

"Well," said he, filling the glasses, "let us drink to Captain Edmond Dantès, husband of the beautiful Catalane!"

Caderousse raised his glass to his mouth with unsteady hand, and swallowed the contents at a gulp. Fernand dashed his on the ground.

"Eh—eh—eh!" stammered Caderousse. "What do I see down there by the wall in the direction of the Catalans? Look, Fernand! your eyes are better than mine. I believe I see double. You know wine is a deceiver; but I should say it was two lovers walking side by side, and hand in hand. Heaven forgive me! they do not know that we can see them, and they are actually embracing!"

Danglars did not lose one pang that Fernand endured.

"Do you know them, M. Fernand?" he said.

"Yes," was the reply in a low voice. "It is M. Edmond and Mademoiselle Mercédès."

"Ah! see there now!" said Caderousse; "and I did not recognize them! Hallo, Dantès! hallo, lovely damsel! Come this way, and let us know when the wedding is to be, for M. Fernand here is so obstinate, he will not tell us!"

"Hold your tongue, will you?" said Danglars, pretending to restrain Caderousse, who, with the tenacity of drunkards, leaned out of the arbour. "Try to stand upright, and let the lovers make love without interruption. See, look at M. Fernand, and follow his example; he is well behaved!"

Fernand, probably excited beyond bearing, pricked by Danglars, as the bull is by the bandilleros, was about to rush out, for he had risen from his seat, and seemed to be collecting himself to dash headlong upon his rival, when Mercédès, smiling and graceful, lifted up her lovely head, and showed her clear and bright eye. At this

Fernand recollected her threat of dying if Edmond died, and dropped again heavily on his seat.

Danglars looked at the two men, one after the other, the one brutalized by liquor, the other overwhelmed with love.

"I shall extract nothing from these fools," he muttered; "and I am very much afraid of being here between a drunkard and a coward. Yet this Catalan has eyes that glisten like the Spaniards, Sicilians, and Calabrians, who practise revenge so well. Unquestionably Edmond's star is in the ascendant, and he will marry the splendid girl. He will be captain, too, and laugh at us all, unless—" a sinister smile passed over Danglar's lips—"unless I mingle in the affair," he added.

"Hallo!" continued Caderousse, half rising, and with his fist on the table—"hallo, Edmond! do you not see your friends, or are you too proud to speak to them?"

"No, my dear fellow," replied Dantès, "I am not proud, but I am happy; and happiness blinds, I think, more than pride."

"Ah, very well, that's an explanation," said Caderousse. "Well, good-day, Madame Dantès."

Mercédès curtseyed gravely, and said,—

"That is not my name, and in my country it bodes ill fortune, they say, to call young girls by the name of their betrothed before he becomes their husband. Call me, then, Mercédès, if you please."

"We must excuse our worthy neighbour Caderousse," said Dantès, "he is so easily mistaken."

"So, then, the wedding is to take place immediately, M. Dantès," said Danglars, bowing to the young couple.

"As soon as possible, M. Danglars. To-day all preliminaries will be arranged at my father's, and to-morrow, or next day at latest, the wedding festival here at La Réserve. My friends will be there, I hope—that is to say, you are invited, M. Danglars, and you, Caderousse."

"And Fernand," said Caderousse, with a chuckle; "Fernand, too, is invited?"

"My wife's brother is my brother," said Edmond; "and we, Mercédès and I, should be very sorry if he were absent at such a time."

Fernand opened his mouth to reply, but his voice died on his lips, and he could not utter a word.

"To-day the preliminaries, to-morrow or next day the ceremony! You are in a hurry, captain."

"Danglars," said Edmond, smiling, "I will say to you as Mercédès said just now to Caderousse, 'Do not give me a title which does not belong to me,' that may bring me bad luck."

"Your pardon," replied Danglars. "I merely said you seemed in a hurry, and we have lots of time. The *Pharaon* cannot be under way again in less than three months."

"We are always in a hurry to be happy, M. Danglars, for when we have suffered a long time, we have great difficulty in believing in good fortune. But it is not selfishness alone that makes me thus in haste. I must go to Paris."

"To Paris, really! And will it be the first time you have ever been there, Dantès?"

"Yes."

"Have you business there?"

"Not of my own; the last commission of poor Captain Leclere—you know to what I allude, Danglars—it is sacred. Besides, I shall only take the time to go and return."

"Yes, yes, I understand," said Danglars, and then in a low tone, he added, "To Paris, no doubt to deliver the letter which the grand marshal gave him. Ah, this letter gives me an idea, a capital idea! Ah, Dantès, my friend, you are not yet registered number one on board the good ship *Pharaon*," then turning towards Edmond, who was walking away, "Good journey," he cried.

"Thank ye," said Edmond, with a friendly nod, and the two lovers continued their route, calm and joyous.

CHAPTER IV.

CONSPIRACY.

DANGLARS followed Edmond and Mercédès with his eyes until the two lovers disappeared behind one of the angles of Fort Saint-Nicolas, then turning round, he perceived Fernand, who had fallen pale and trembling into his chair, whilst Caderousse stammered out the words of a drinking song.

"Well, my dear sir," said Danglars to Fernand, "here is a marriage which does not appear to make everybody happy."

"It drives me to despair," said Fernand.

"Do you, then, love Mercédès?"

"I adore her!"

"Have you loved her long?"

"Ever since I have known her."

"And you sit there, tearing your hair, instead of seeking to remedy your condition! I did not think it was thus your nation acted."

"What would you have me do?" said Fernand.

"How do I know? Is it my affair? I am not in love with Mademoiselle Mercédès; but for you—seek, and you shall find."

"I have found already."

"What?"

"I would stab the man, but the woman told me that if any misfortune happened to her betrothed she would kill herself."

"Pooh! Women say those things, but never do them."

"You do not know Mercédès. What she threatens she will do."

"Idiot!" muttered Danglars, "whether she kill herself or not, what matter provided Dantès is not captain?"

"Before Mercédès should die," replied Fernand, with the accents of unshaken resolution, "I would die myself!"

"That's what I call love!" said Caderousse, with a voice more tipsy than ever. "That's love, or I don't know what love is."

"Come," said Danglars, "you appear to me a good sort of fellow, and, hang me! but I should like to help you, but——"

"You were saying, sir," said Fernand, awaiting with great anxiety the end of this remark.

"Yes; but I added, to help you it would be sufficient that Dantès did not marry her you love; and the marriage may easily be thwarted, methinks, and yet Dantès need not die."

"Death alone can separate them," remarked Fernand.

"You talk like a noodle, my friend," said Caderousse, "and here is Danglars, who is a wide-awake, clever, deep fellow, who will prove to you that you are wrong. Prove it, Danglars. I have answered for you. Say there is no need why Dantès should die; it would, indeed, be a pity he should. Dantès is a good fellow. I like Dantès—Dantès, your health!"

Fernand rose impatiently.

"Let him run on," said Danglars, restraining the young man; "drunk as he is, he is not much out in what he says. Absence severs as well as death, and if the walls of a prison were between Edmond and Mercédès they would be as effectually separated as if they lay under a tombstone."

"Yes; only people get out of prison," said Caderousse, who, with what sense was left him, listened eagerly to the conversation, "and when they get out, and their names are Edmond Dantès, they revenge——"

"What matters that?" muttered Fernand.

"And why, I should like to know," persisted Caderousse, "should they put Dantès in prison? He has neither robbed, nor killed, nor murdered."

"Hold your tongue!" said Danglars.

"I won't hold my tongue!" replied Caderousse. "I say I want to know why they should put Dantès in prison. I like Dantès!—Dantès, your health!" and he swallowed another glass of wine.

Danglars saw in the muddled look of the tailor the progress of his intoxication, and turning towards Fernand, said,—

"Well, you understand there is no need to kill him."

"Certainly not, if, as you said just now, you have the means of having Dantès arrested. Have you that means?"

"It is to be found for the searching. But why should I meddle in the matter? It is no affair of mine."

"I know not why you meddle," said Fernand, seizing his arm; "but this I know, you have some motive of personal hatred against Dantès, for he who himself hates is never mistaken in the sentiments of others."

"I! motives of hatred against Dantès? None, on my word! I saw you were unhappy, and your unhappiness interested me—that's all. But the moment you believe I act for my own account, adieu, my dear friend, get out of the affair as best you may." And Danglars rose as if he meant to depart.

"But the means—the means?" said Fernand.

"Have you not hit upon any?"

"No! You undertook to do so."

"True," replied Danglars; "the French have the superiority over the Spaniards — that the Spaniards ruminate whilst the French invent."

"Do you invent, then," said Fernand impatiently.

"Waiter," said Danglars, "pen, ink, and paper."

"Pen, ink, and paper," muttered Fernand.

"Yes. I am a supercargo; pen, ink, and paper are my tools, and without my tools I am fit for nothing."

"Pen, ink, and paper!" then called Fernand loudly.

"All you require is a table," said the waiter, pointing to the writing materials.

"Bring them here."

The waiter did as he was desired.

"When one thinks," said Caderousse, letting his hand drop on the paper, "there is here wherewithal to kill a man more sure than if we waited at the corner of a wood to assassinate him. I have always had more dread of a pen, a bottle of ink, and a sheet of paper than of a sword or pistol."

"The fellow is not so drunk as he appears to be," said Danglars. "Give him some more wine, Fernand." Fernand filled Caderousse's glass, who, toper as he was, lifted his hand from the paper and seized the glass.

The Catalan watched him until Caderousse, almost overcome by this fresh assault on his senses, rested or rather allowed his glass to fall upon the table.

"Well!" resumed the Catalan, as he saw the final glimmer of Caderousse's reason vanishing before the last glass of wine.

"Well, then, I should say, for instance," resumed Danglars, "that if after a voyage such as Dantès has just made, and in which he touched the Isle of Elba, some one were to denounce him to the king's procureur as a Bonapartist agent——"

"I will denounce him!" exclaimed the young man hastily.

"Yes, but they will make you then sign your declaration, and confront you with him you have denounced. I will supply you with the means of supporting your accusation, for I know the fact well. But Dantès cannot remain for ever in prison, and one day or other he will leave it, and the day when he comes out, woe betide him who was the cause of his incarceration!"

"Oh, I should wish nothing better than that he would come and seek a quarrel with me."

"Yes, and Mercédès—Mercédès who will detest you

if you have only the misfortune to scratch the skin of her dearly beloved Edmond!"

"True!" said Fernand.

"No, no!" continued Danglars; "if we resolve on such a step, it would be much better to take, as I now do, this pen, dip it into this ink, and write with the left hand (that the writing may not be recognized) the denunciation we propose." And Danglars, uniting practice with theory, wrote with his left hand—and in a writing reversed from his usual style, and totally unlike it—the following lines which he handed to Fernand, and which Fernand read in an undertone:—

"Monsieur,—The procureur du roi is informed by a friend of the throne and religion that one Edmond Dantès, mate of the ship *Pharaon*, arrived this morning from Smyrna, after having touched at Naples and Porto-Ferrajo, has been entrusted by Murat with a letter for the usurper, and by the usurper with a letter for the Bonapartist committee in Paris.

"Proof of this crime will be found on arresting him, for the letter will be found upon him, or at his father's, or in his cabin on board the *Pharaon*."

"Very good," resumed Danglars; "now your revenge looks like common sense, for in no way can it revert to yourself, and the matter will thus work its own way. There is nothing to do now but fold the letter as I am doing, and write upon it, 'To M. le Procureur Royal,' and that's all settled."

And Danglars wrote the address as he spoke.

"Yes, and that's all settled!" exclaimed Caderousse, who, by a last effort of intellect, had followed the reading of the letter, and instinctively comprehended all the misery which such a denunciation must entail. "Yes, and that's all settled; only it will be an infamous shame," and he stretched out his hand to reach the letter.

"Yes," said Danglars, taking it from beyond his reach; "and as what I say and do is merely in jest, and I amongst the first and foremost should be sorry if any-

thing happened to Dantès—the worthy Dantès—look here!"

And taking the letter he squeezed it up in his hands and threw it into a corner of the arbour.

"All right!" said Caderousse. "Dantès is my friend, and I won't have him ill-used."

"And who thinks of using him ill? Certainly neither I nor Fernand!" said Danglars, rising and looking at the young man, who still remained seated, but whose eye was fixed on the denunciatory sheet of paper flung into the corner.

"In this case," replied Caderousse, "let's have some more wine. I wish to drink to the health of Edmond and the lovely Mercédès."

"You have had too much already, drunkard," said Danglars; "and if you continue you will be compelled to sleep here, because unable to stand on your legs."

"I?" said Caderousse, rising with all the offended dignity of a drunken man, "I can't keep on my legs! Why, I'll bet a wager I go up into the belfry of the Acoules, and without staggering, too!"

"Well done!" said Danglars. "I'll take your bet; but to-morrow—to-day it is time to return. Give me your arm, and let us go."

"Very well, let us go," said Caderousse; "but I don't want your arm at all. Come, Fernand, won't you return to Marseilles with us?"

"No," said Fernand; "I shall return to the Catalans."

"You're wrong. Come with us to Marseilles—come along."

"I will not."

"What do you mean? You will not? Well, just as you like, my prince; there's liberty for all the world. Come along, Danglars, and let the young gentleman return to the Catalans if he chooses."

Danglars took advantage of Caderousse's temper at the moment to take him off towards Marseilles by the Porte Saint-Victor, staggering as he went.

When they had advanced about twenty yards, Danglars looked back and saw Fernand stoop, pick up the crumpled paper, and putting it into his pocket, then rush out of the arbour towards Pillon.

"Well," said Caderousse, "why, what a lie he told! He said he was going to the Catalans, and he is going to the city. Holloa, Fernand!"

"Oh, you see wrong," said Danglars; "he's gone right enough."

"Well," said Caderousse, "I should have said not—how treacherous wine is!"

CHAPTER V.

THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

THE morning's sun rose clear and resplendent, gilding the heavens and even the foamy waves with its bright refulgent beams.

The plenteous feast had been prepared at La Réserve, with whose arbour the reader is already familiar. The apartment destined for the purpose was spacious, and lighted by a number of windows, over each of which was written in golden letters the name of one of the principal cities of France; beneath these windows a wooden balcony extended the entire length of the house. And although the entertainment was fixed for twelve o'clock at noon, an hour previous to that time the balcony was filled with impatient and expectant guests, consisting of the favoured part of the crew of the *Pharaon* and other personal friends of the bridegroom, the whole of whom had arrayed themselves in their choicest costumes, in order to do greater honour to the day.

An enthusiastic burst of applause from the crew of the *Pharaon* announced the presence of M. Morrel, who hailed the visit of the shipowner as a sure indication that

the man whose wedding feast he thus delighted to honour would ere long be first in command of the *Pharaon ;* and as Dantès was universally beloved on board his vessel, the sailors put no restraint on their tumultuous joy at finding the opinion and choice of their superiors so exactly coincide with their own.

This noisy though hearty welcome over, Danglars and Caderousse were dispatched to the residence of the bridegroom to convey to him the intelligence of the arrival of the important personage who had recently joined them, and to desire he would hasten to receive his honourable guest.

The above-mentioned individuals started off upon their errand at full speed ; but ere they had gone many steps they perceived a group advancing towards them, composed of the betrothed pair, a party of young girls in attendance on the bride, by whose side walked Dantès's father, the whole brought up by Fernand, whose lips wore their usual sinister smile.

As Danglars approached the disappointed lover he cast on him a look of deep meaning, while Fernand, as he slowly paced behind the happy pair, who seemed, in their own unmixed content, to have entirely forgotten that such a being as himself existed, was pale and abstracted. Occasionally, however, a deep flush would overspread his countenance and a nervous contraction distort his features, while, with an agitated and restless gaze, he would glance in the direction of Marseilles like one who either anticipated or foresaw some great and important event.

Dantès himself was simply though becomingly clad in the dress peculiar to the merchant service—a costume somewhat between a military and a civil garb ; and with his fine countenance, radiant with joy and happiness a more perfect specimen of manly beauty could scarcely be imagined.

Lovely as the Greeks of Cyprus or Chios, Mercédès boasted the same bright flashing eyes of jet, and ripe

round, coral lips. One more practised in the arts of great cities would have hid her blushes beneath a veil, or at least have cast down her thickly fringed lashes, so as to have concealed the liquid lustre of her animated eyes; but, on the contrary, the delighted girl looked around her with a smile that seemed to invite all who saw her to behold, and beholding, to rejoice with her in her exceeding happiness.

Immediately the bridal *cortège* came in sight of La Réserve, M. Morrel came forth to meet it, followed by the soldiers and sailors there assembled, to whom he had repeated the promise already given, that Dantès should be the successor to the late Captain Leclere. Edmond, at the approach of his patron, respectfully placed the arm of his affianced bride within that of M. Morrel, who, forthwith conducting her up the flight of wooden steps leading to the chamber in which the feast was prepared, was gaily followed by the guests, beneath whose thronging numbers the slight structure creaked and groaned as though alarmed at the unusual pressure.

"Father," said Mercédès, stopping when she had reached the centre of the table, "sit, I pray you, on my right hand; on my left I will place him who has ever been as a brother to me," pointing with a soft and gentle smile to Fernand; but her words and look seemed to inflict the direst torture on him, for his lips became ghastly pale, and even beneath the dark hue of his complexion the blood might be seen retreating as though some sudden pang drove it back to the heart.

During this time Dantès, at the opposite side of the table, had been occupied in similarly placing his most honoured guests. M. Morrel was seated at his right hand, Danglars at his left, while at a sign from Edmond the rest of the company arranged themselves as they found it most agreeable.

"A pretty silence, truly!" said the old father of the bridegroom, as he carried to his lips a glass of wine of the hue and brightness of the topaz, and which had just

been placed before Mercédès herself. "Now, would anybody think that this room contained a happy, merry party who desire nothing better than to laugh and dance the hours away?"

"Ah!" sighed Caderousse, "a man cannot always feel happy because he is about to be married!"

"The truth is," replied Dantès, "that I am too happy for noisy mirth; if that is what you meant by your observation, my worthy friend, you were right. Joy takes a strange effect at times; it seems to oppress us almost the same as sorrow."

Danglars looked towards Fernand, whose excitable nature received and betrayed each fresh impression.

"Why, what ails you?" asked he of Edmond. "Do you fear any approaching evil? I should say you were the happiest man alive at this instant."

"And that is the very thing that alarms me," returned Dantès. "Man does not appear to me to be intended to enjoy felicity so unmixed. Happiness is like the enchanted palaces we read of in our childhood, where fierce fiery dragons defend the entrance and approach; and monsters of all shapes and kinds, requiring to be overcome ere victory is ours. I own that I am lost in wonder to find myself promoted to an honour of which I feel myself unworthy—that of being the husband of Mercédès."

"Nay, nay!" cried Caderousse, smiling, "you have not attained that honour yet. Mercédès is not yet your wife. Just assume the tone and manner of a husband, and see how she will remind you that your hour has not yet come!"

The bride blushed, and seemed half inclined to be angry, while Fernand, restless and uneasy, seemed to start at every fresh sound, occasionally applying his handkerchief to his brow to wipe away the large drops of perspiration that gathered again almost as soon as they were removed.

"Well, never mind that, neighbour Caderousse; it is

not worth while to contradict me for such a trifle as that. 'Tis true that Mercédès is not actually my wife; but," added he, drawing out his watch, "in an hour and a half from this she will be as fast and firm as holy church can make her."

A general exclamation of surprise ran round the table, with the exception of the elder Dantès, whose laugh displayed the still perfect beauty of his large white teeth. Mercédès looked pleased and gratified, while Fernand grasped the handle of his knife with a convulsive clutch.

"In an hour?" inquired Danglars, turning pale. "How is that, my friend?"

"Why, thus it is," replied Dantès. "Thanks to the influence of M. Morrel, to whom, next to my father, I owe every blessing I enjoy, every difficulty has been removed. We have purchased permission to waive the usual delay; and at half-past two o'clock the mayor of Marseilles will be waiting for us at the Hotel-de-Ville. Now, as a quarter past one has already struck, I do not consider I have asserted too much in saying that in another hour and thirty minutes Mercédès will have become Madame Dantès."

Fernand closed his eyes, a burning sensation passed across his brow, and he was compelled to support himself by the table to prevent his falling from his chair; but in spite of all his efforts he could not refrain from uttering a deep groan, which, however, was lost amid the noisy felicitations of the company.

"Upon my word," cried the old man, "you make short work of these kind of affairs. Arrived here only yesterday morning, and married to-day at three o'clock! Commend me to a sailor for going the quick way to work!"

"But," asked Danglars in a timid tone, "how did you manage about the other formalities—the contract—the settlement?"

"Oh, bless you," answered Dantès laughingly, "our papers were soon drawn up. Mercédès has no fortune;

I have none to settle on her. So, you see, our papers were quickly written out, and certainly do not come very expensive."

This joke elicited a fresh burst of applause.

"So that what we presumed to be merely the betrothed feast turns out to be the actual wedding dinner?" said Danglars.

"No, no!" answered Dantès; "don't imagine I am going to put you off in that shabby manner. To-morrow morning I start for Paris: five days to go, and the same to return, with one day to discharge the commission entrusted to me, is all the time I shall be absent. I shall be back here by the 12th of March, and the next day I give my real marriage feast."

This prospect of fresh festivity redoubled the hilarity of the guests to such a degree that the elder Dantès, who at the commencement of the repast had commented upon the silence that prevailed, now found it difficult, amid the general din of voices, to obtain a moment's tranquillity in which to drink to the health and prosperity of the bride and bridegroom.

Dantès, perceiving the affectionate eagerness of his father, responded by a look of grateful pleasure, while Mercédès, whose eyes had been constantly consulting the *pendule* which decked the chamber, made an expressive gesture to Edmond.

The paleness of Fernand appeared to have communicated itself to Danglars. As for Fernand himself, he seemed as though undergoing the tortures of the damned; unable to rest, he was among the first to quit the table, and as though seeking to avoid the hilarious mirth that rose in such deafening sounds, he continued, in utter silence, to pace the farther end of the salon.

Caderousse approached him just as Danglars, whom Fernand seemed most anxious to avoid, had joined him in a corner of the room.

"Upon my word," said Caderousse, from whose mind the friendly treatment of Dantès, united with the effect

of the excellent wine he had partaken of, had effaced every feeling of envy or jealousy at Dantès's good fortune —" upon my word, Dantès is a downright good fellow, and when I see him sitting there beside his pretty wife that is so soon to be, I cannot help thinking it would have been a great pity to have served him that trick you were planning yesterday."

" Oh, there was no harm meant," answered Danglars. " At first I certainly did feel somewhat uneasy as regarded what Fernand might be tempted to do ; but when I saw how completely he had mastered his feelings, even so far as to become one of his rival's bride's-men, I knew there was no further cause for apprehension."

Caderousse looked full at Fernand—he was ghastly pale.

" Certainly," continued Danglars, " the sacrifice was no trifling one when the beauty of the bride is considered. Upon my soul, that future captain of mine is a lucky dog ! Gad, I only wish he would let me take his place ! "

" Shall we not set forth ? " asked the sweet, silvery voice of Mercédès ; " two o'clock has just struck, and you know we are expected at the Hotel-de-Ville in a quarter of an hour."

" To be sure—to be sure ! " cried Dantès, eagerly quitting the table. " Let us go directly ! "

His words were re-echoed by the whole party, who rose with a simultaneous cheer, and commenced forming themselves into procession.

At this moment Danglars, who had been incessantly observing every change in Fernand's look and manner, perceived him stagger and fall back, with an almost convulsive spasm, against a seat placed near one of the open windows. At the same instant the ear caught a sort of indistinct sound on the stairs, followed by the measured tread of soldiery, with the clanking of swords and military accoutrements ; then came a hum and buzz as of many voices, so as to deaden even the noisy mirth

of the bridal party, among whom a vague feeling of curiosity and apprehension quelled every disposition to talk, and almost instantaneously the most deathlike stillness prevailed.

Nearer and nearer came those sounds of terror. Three distinct knocks, as though from the hilt of a sword against the door, increased the fears of the before gay party. Each looked inquiringly in the countenance of his neighbour, while all wished themselves quietly and safely at home.

"I demand admittance," said a loud voice outside the room, "in the name of the law!"

As no attempt was made to prevent it, the door was opened, and a magistrate, wearing his official scarf, presented himself, followed by four soldiers and a corporal. Uneasiness now yielded to the most extreme dread on the part of those present.

"May I venture to inquire the reason of this unexpected visit?" said M. Morrel, addressing the magistrate, whom he evidently knew. "There is doubtless some mistake easily explained."

"If it be so," replied the magistrate, "rely upon every reparation being made. Meanwhile, I am the bearer of an order of arrest, and although I most reluctantly perform the task assigned me, it must nevertheless be fulfilled. Who among the persons here assembled answers to the name of Edmond Dantès?"

Every eye was turned towards the individual so described, who, spite of the agitation he could not but feel, advanced with dignity, and said in a firm voice, "I am he. What is your pleasure with me?"

"Edmond Dantès," replied the magistrate, "I arrest you in the name of the law!"

"Me!" replied Edmond, slightly changing colour, "and wherefore, I pray?"

"I cannot inform you, but you will be duly acquainted with the reasons that have rendered such a step necessary at your first examination."

M. Morrel felt that further resistance or remonstrance was useless. He saw before him an officer delegated to enforce the law, and perfectly well knew that it would be as unavailing to seek pity from a magistrate decked with his official scarf as to address a petition to some cold marble effigy. Old Dantès, however, saw not all this. His paternal heart could not contemplate the idea of such an outrage as consigned his beloved child to prison amid the joys of his wedding feast. Rushing forwards, therefore, he threw himself at the magistrate's feet, and prayed and supplicated in terms so moving that even the officer was touched; and, although firm to his duty, he kindly said, "My worthy friend, let me beg of you to calm your apprehensions. Your son has probably neglected some prescribed form or attention in registering his cargo, and it is more than probable he will be set at liberty directly he has given the information required, whether touching the health of his crew or the value of his freight."

"What is the meaning of all this?" inquired Caderousse frowningly of Danglars, who had assumed an air of utter surprise.

"How can I tell you?" replied he. "I am, like yourself, utterly bewildered at all that is going on, not a word of which do I understand."

Caderousse then looked round for Fernand, but he had disappeared.

The scene of the previous night now came back to his mind with startling accuracy. The painful catastrophe he had just witnessed appeared effectually to have rent away the veil which the intoxication of the evening before had raised between himself and his memory.

"So! so!" said he, in a hoarse and choking voice, to Danglars. "This, then, I suppose, is a part of the trick you were concerting yesterday? All I can say is, that if it be so, 'tis an ill turn, and well deserves to bring double evil on those who have projected it."

"Nonsense!" returned Danglars. "I tell you again

I have nothing whatever to do with it; besides, you know very well that I tore the paper to pieces."

"No, you did not!" answered Caderousse; "you merely threw it by—I saw it lying in a corner."

"Hold your tongue, you fool!—what should you know about it? Why, you were drunk!"

"Where is Fernand?" inquired Caderousse.

"How do I know?" replied Danglars. "Gone, as every prudent man ought to do, to look after his own affairs, most likely. Never mind where he is, let you and I go and see what is to be done for our poor friends in this their affliction."

During this conversation Dantès, after having exchanged a cheerful shake of the hand with all his sympathizing friends, had surrendered himself to the officer sent to arrest him, merely saying, "Make yourselves quite easy, my good fellows; there is some little mistake to clear up, that's all, depend upon it, and very likely I may not have to go so far as the prison to effect that."

"Oh, to be sure!" responded Danglars, who had now approached the group, "nothing more than a mistake, I feel quite certain."

Dantès descended the staircase, preceded by the magistrate, and followed by the soldiers. A carriage awaited him at the door; he got in, followed by two soldiers and the magistrate, and the vehicle drove off towards Marseilles.

"Adieu! adieu! dearest Edmond!" cried Mercédès, stretching out her arms to him from the balcony.

The prisoner, whose ready ear caught the despairing accents of his betrothed, felt as though the chill hand of death pressed on his heart, as leaning from the coach he tried to reply in cheerful tones,—

"Good-bye, my sweet Mercédès! We shall soon meet again!"

The rapid progress of the vehicle, which disappeared round one of the turnings of Fort Saint-Nicolas, prevented his adding more.

"Wait for me here, all of you," cried M. Morrel. "I will take the first conveyance I find, and hurry to Marseilles, whence I will bring you word how all is going on."

"That's right!" exclaimed a multitude of voices; "go, and return as quickly as you can."

This second departure was followed by a long and fearful state of terrified silence on the part of those who were left behind. The old father and Mercédès remained for some time apart, each absorbed in their separate griefs; but at length the two poor victims of the same blow raised their eyes, and with a simultaneous burst of feeling rushed into each other's arms.

Meanwhile Fernand made his reappearance, poured out for himself a glass of water with a trembling hand, then, hastily swallowing it, went to sit down on the first vacant chair he perceived, and this was, by mere chance, placed next to the seat on which poor Mercédès had fallen, half fainting, when released from the warm and affectionate embrace of old Dantès. Instinctively Fernand drew back his chair.

"He is the cause of all this misery; I am quite sure of it," whispered Caderousse—who had never taken his eyes off Fernand—to Danglars.

"I really do not think so," answered the other; "he is too stupid to imagine such a scheme. I only hope the mischief will fall upon the head of whoever wrought it."

"You don't mention those who aided and abetted the cruel deed any more than those who advised it," said Caderousse.

"Surely," answered Danglars, "one cannot be expected to become responsible for all the idle words one may have been obliged to listen to in the course of our lives."

Meantime the subject of the arrest was being canvassed in every different form.

"What think you, Danglars," said one of the party, turning towards him, "of the late unfortunate event?"

"Why, upon my word, I know not what to say," replied he. "I think, however, that it is just possible Dantès may have been detected with some trifling article on board ship considered here as contraband."

"But how could he have done so without your knowledge, Danglars, who was the ship's supercargo?"

"Why, as for that, I could only know what I was told respecting the merchandise with which the vessel was laden. I know she was loaded with cotton, and that she took in her freight at Alexandria from the magazine of M. Pastret, and at Smyrna from M. Pascal's; that is all I was obliged to know, and I beg I may not be asked for any further particulars."

"Now, I recollect!" cried the afflicted old father; "my poor boy told me yesterday he had got a small case of coffee and another of tobacco for me."

"There, you see!" exclaimed Danglars. "Now the mischief is out. Depend upon it, the custom-house people went rummaging about the ship in our absence, and discovered poor Dantès's hidden treasures."

Mercédès, however, paid no heed to this explanation of her lover's arrest. Her grief, which she had hitherto tried to restrain, now burst out in a violent fit of hysterical sobbing.

"Come, come," said the old man, "be comforted, my poor child; there is still hope!"

"Hope!" repeated Danglars.

"Hope!" faintly murmured Fernand; but the word seemed to die away on his pale, agitated lips, and a convulsive spasm passed over his countenance.

"Good news!—good news!" shouted forth one of the party stationed in the balcony on the lookout. "Here comes M. Morrel back. No doubt now we shall hear that our friend is released."

Mercédès and the old man rushed to meet the person from whom they hoped so much; but the first glance of the pale, desponding countenance of M. Morrel prepared them for evil tidings.

"What news?" exclaimed a general burst of voices.

"Alas! my friends," replied M. Morrel, with a mournful shake of his head, "the thing has assumed a more serious aspect than I expected."

"Oh! indeed—indeed, sir, he is innocent!" sobbed forth Mercédès.

"That I believe," answered M. Morrel; "but still he is charged——"

"With what?" inquired the elder Dantès.

"With being an agent of the Bonapartist faction!"

Many of my readers may be able to recollect how formidable such an accusation became in the period at which our story is dated.

A despairing cry escaped the pale lips of Mercédès, while the heart-stricken father fell listlessly into a chair kindly placed for him by one of the pitying guests.

"Ah, Danglars!" whispered Caderousse, "you have deceived me; the trick you spoke of last night has been played off, I see. But I cannot suffer a poor old man or an innocent girl to die of grief through your fault. I am determined to tell them all about it."

"Be silent, you simpleton," cried Danglars, grasping him by the arm, "or I will not answer even for your own safety. Who can tell whether Dantès be innocent or guilty? The vessel did touch at Elba, where he quitted it, and passed a whole day in the island. Now, should any letters or other documents of a compromising character be found upon him, will it not be taken for granted that all who uphold him are his accomplices?"

With the rapid instinct of selfishness, Caderousse readily perceived the solidity of this mode of reasoning. He gazed doubtfully, wistfully, on Danglars, and then insensibly continued to retreat from the dangerous proximity in which he found himself.

"Suppose we wait awhile, and see what comes of it," said he, casting a bewildered look on his companion.

"To be sure!" answered Danglars. "Let us wait by all means. If he be innocent, of course he will be

set at liberty; if guilty, why, it is no use involving ourselves in his conspiracy."

"Then let us go hence. I cannot stay to endure the sight of that old man's distress."

"With all my heart!" replied Danglars, but too pleased to find a partner in his retreat. "Let us take ourselves out of the way, and leave every one else to do the same thing, if they please."

After their departure, Fernand, who had now again become the only friend and protector poor Mercédès could find in this trying hour, led the weeping girl back to her home, which she had quitted with such different hopes and feelings in the morning, while some friends of Dantès conducted the poor heart-broken parent to his childless and dreary abode.

The rumour of Edmond's arrest as a Bonapartist agent was not slow in circulating throughout the city.

"Could you ever have credited such a thing, my dear Danglars?" asked M. Morrel, as on his return to the port for the purpose of gleaning fresh tidings of Dantès, he overtook his supercargo and Caderousse. "Could you have believed such a thing possible?"

"Why, you know I told you," replied Danglars, "that I considered the circumstance of his having anchored at the Isle of Elba as a very suspicious circumstance."

"And did you mention these suspicions to any person besides myself?"

"Certainly not," returned Danglars; then added in a low whisper, "You understand that, on account of your uncle, M. Policar Morrel, who served under the other government, and who does not altogether conceal what he thinks on the subject, you are strongly suspected of regretting the abdication of Napoleon. I should have feared to injure both Edmond and yourself had I divulged my own apprehensions to a soul. I am too well aware that though a subordinate, like myself, is bound to acquaint the shipowner with everything

that occurs, there are many things he ought most carefully to conceal from all else."

"'Tis well, Danglars—'tis well!" replied M. Morrel. "You are a worthy fellow; and I had already thought of your interests in the event of poor Edmond having become captain of the *Pharaon*."

"Is it possible you were so kind?"

"Yes, indeed. I had previously inquired of Dantès what was his opinion of you, and if he should have any reluctance to continue you in your post, for somehow I have perceived a sort of coolness between you two that led me to believe that he would rather have another in your place as supercargo."

"And what was his reply?"

"That he certainly did think he had given you offence in an affair which he merely referred to without entering into particulars; but that whoever possessed the good opinion and confidence of the ship's owners would have his preference also."

"The hypocrite!" murmured Danglars between his teeth.

"Poor Dantès," said Caderousse. "No one can deny his being a noble-hearted young fellow!"

"But in the midst of all our trouble," continued M. Morrel, "we must not forget that the *Pharaon* has at present no captain."

"Oh!" replied Danglars, "since we cannot leave this port for the next three months, let us hope that ere the expiration of that period Dantès will be set at liberty."

"Of that I entertain no doubt; but in the meantime what are we to do?"

"I am entirely at your service, M. Morrel," answered Danglars. "You know that I am as capable of managing a ship as the most experienced captain in the service; and it will be so far advantageous to you to accept my services, that upon Edmond's release from prison no further change will be requisite on board the *Pharaon*

than for Dantès and myself each to resume our respective posts."

"Thanks! thanks! my good friend, for your excellent idea and acceptable proposition—that will smooth all difficulties. I fully authorize you at once to assume the command of the *Pharaon*, and look carefully to the unloading of her freight. Private misfortunes must never induce us to neglect public affairs."

"Depend upon my zeal and attention, M. Morrel. But when do you think it likely we may be permitted to visit our poor friend in his prison?"

"I will let you know that directly I have seen M. de Villefort, whom I shall endeavour to interest in Edmond's favour. I am aware he is a furious Royalist; but, spite of that, and of his being the 'king's procureur,' he is a man like ourselves, and I fancy not a bad sort of one."

"Perhaps not," replied Danglars; "but he is universally spoken of as extremely ambitious, and ambition is a sore hardener of the heart."

"Well, well!" returned M. Morrel, "we shall see. But now hasten on board; I will join you there ere long." So saying, the worthy shipowner quitted the two allies, and proceeded in the direction of the Palais de Justice.

"You see," said Danglars, addressing Caderousse, "the turn things have taken. Do you still feel any desire to stand up in his defence?"

"Not the slightest; but yet it seems to me a shocking thing that a mere joke should lead to such frightful consequences."

"But who perpetrated that joke, let me ask? Neither you nor myself, but Fernand. You know very well that I threw the paper into a corner of the room; indeed I fancied I had destroyed it."

"Oh no!" replied Caderousse, "that I can answer for, you did not. I only wish I could see it now as plainly as I saw it lying all crushed and crumpled in a corner of the arbour."

"Well, then, if you did, depend upon it, Fernand

picked it up, and either copied it or caused it to be copied; perhaps, even he did not take the trouble of recopying it. And now I think of it, by heavens, he has sent the letter itself! Fortunately for me, the handwriting was disguised."

"Then you were aware of Dantès being engaged in a conspiracy?"

"Not I. As I before said, I thought the whole thing was a joke, nothing more. It seems, however, that I have unconsciously stumbled upon the truth."

"Still," argued Caderousse, "I would give a great deal if nothing of the kind had happened; or, at least, that I had had no hand in it. You will see, Danglars, that it will turn out an unlucky job for both of us."

"Nonsense! If any harm comes of it, it should fall on the guilty person; and that, you know, is Fernand. How can we be implicated in any way? All we have got to do is to keep our own counsel, and remain perfectly quiet, not breathing a word to any living soul; and you will see that the storm will pass away without in the least affecting us."

"Amen!" responded Caderousse, waving his hand in token of adieu to Danglars, and bending his steps towards the Allées de Meillan, moving his head to and fro, and muttering as he went after the manner of one whose mind was overcharged with one absorbing idea.

"So far, then," said Danglars mentally, "all has gone as I would have it. I am temporarily commander of the *Pharaon*, with the certainty of being permanently so, if that fool of a Caderousse can be persuaded to hold his tongue. My only fear is the chance of Dantès being released. But, bah! he is in the hands of justice; and," added he, with a smile, "she will take her own."

So saying, he leaped into a boat, desiring to be rowed on board the *Pharaon*, where M. Morrel had appointed to meet him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEPUTY PROCUREUR DU ROI.

In one of the large aristocratical mansions situated in the Rue du Grand Cours, opposite the fountain of Medusa, a second marriage feast was being celebrated, almost at the same hour with the ill-fated nuptial repast given by Dantès.

In this case, however, although the occasion of the entertainment was similar, the company assembled formed a striking difference. Instead of a rude mixture of sailors, soldiers, and those belonging to the humblest grade of life, the present *réunion* was composed of the very flower and *élite* of Marseilles society—magistrates who had resigned their office during the usurper's reign; officers who, scorning to fight under his banners, had offered their services to foreign powers.

The guests were still at table, and the heated and energetic conversation that prevailed betrayed the violent and vindictive passions that then agitated each dweller of the south, where, unhappily, religious strife had long given increased bitterness to the violence of party feeling.

The magistrates freely discussed their political views, the military part of the company talked unreservedly of Moscow and Leipsic, while the females indulged in open comments upon the divorce of the Empress Josephine.

All seemed to evince that in this focus of royalism it was not over the downfall of one man they rejoiced, but in the bright and cheering prospect of a revivified political existence for themselves.

An old man, decorated with the cross of Saint Louis, now rose and proposed the health of Louis XVIII. This aged individual was the Marquis de Saint-Méran.

This toast, recalling at once the patient exile of Hartwell and the peace-loving king of France, excited uni-

versal enthusiasm; glasses were elevated in the air *à l'anglaise;* and the ladies, snatching their bouquets from their fair bosoms, strewed the table with their floral treasures. In a word, an almost poetical fervour prevailed.

"Ah!" said the Marquise de Saint-Méran, a woman with a stern, forbidding eye, though still noble and elegant-looking, despite her having reached her fiftieth year—"ah! these revolutionists, who have driven us from those very possessions they afterwards purchased for a mere trifle during the Reign of Terror, would be compelled to own, were they here, that all true devotion was on our side, since we were content to follow the fortunes of a falling monarch, while they, on the contrary, made their fortunes by worshipping the rising sun. Yes, yes, they could not help admitting that the king, for whom we sacrificed rank, wealth, and station, was truly our 'Louis the Well-beloved!' while their wretched usurper has been, and ever will be, to them their evil genius, their 'Napoleon the Accursed!' Am I not right, Villefort?"

"I beg your pardon, madame. I really must pray you to excuse me; but, in truth, I was not attending to the conversation."

"Marquise! marquise!" interposed the same elderly personage who had proposed the toast, "let the young people alone. Let me tell you, on one's wedding day there are more agreeable subjects of conversation than dry politics."

"Never mind, dearest mother," said a young and lovely girl, with a profusion of light brown hair, and eyes that seemed to float in liquid crystal; "'tis all my fault for seizing upon M. de Villefort so as to prevent his listening to what you said. But there—now take him—he is all your own, for as long as you like.—M. Villefort, I beg to remind you my mother speaks to you."

"If Madame la Marquise will deign to repeat the words I but imperfectly caught, I shall be delighted to answer," said M. de Villefort.

"Never mind, Renée," replied the marquise, with such a look of tenderness as all were astonished to see her harsh, dry features capable of expressing—for, however all other feelings may be withered in a woman's nature, there is always one bright smiling spot in the maternal breast, and that is where a dearly-beloved child is concerned—"I forgive you.—What I was saying, Villefort, was that the Bonapartists had neither our sincerity, enthusiasm, nor devotion."

"They had, however, what supplied the place of those fine qualities," replied the young man, "and that was fanaticism. Napoleon is the Mahomet of the West, and is worshipped by his commonplace but ambitious followers, not only as a leader and lawgiver, but also as the personification of equality."

"He!" cried the marquise—"Napoleon the type of equality!—for mercy's sake, then, what would you call Robespierre? Come, come, do not strip the latter of his just rights, to bestow them on one who has usurped enough, methinks."

"Nay, madame; I would place each of these heroes on his right pedestal; that of Robespierre to be built where his scaffold was erected; that of Napoleon on the column of the Place Vendôme. The only difference consists in the opposite character of the equality supported by these two men. The one advocates the equality that elevates, the other professes the equality that depresses; the one brings a king within reach of the guillotine, the other elevates the people to a level with the throne. Observe," said Villefort, smiling, "I do not mean to deny that both the individuals we have been referring to were revolutionary scoundrels, and that the 9th Thermidor and 4th of April were lucky days for France, worthy of being gratefully remembered by every friend to monarchy and civil order; and that explains how it comes to pass, that, fallen as I trust he is for ever, Napoleon has still preserved a train of parasitical satellites. Still, marquise, it has been so with other usurpers—Cromwell, for

instance, who was not half so bad as Napoleon, had his partisans and advocates."

"Do you know, Villefort, that you are talking in a most dreadfully revolutionary strain?—but I excuse it. It is impossible to expect the son of a Girondin to be free from a small spice of the old leaven."

A deep crimson suffused the countenance of Villefort.

"'Tis true, madame," answered he, "that my father was a Girondin, but he was not among the number of those who voted for the king's death; he was an equal sufferer with yourself during the Reign of Terror, and had wellnigh lost his head on the same scaffold as your own father."

"True!" replied the marquise, without wincing in the slightest degree at the tragical remembrance thus called up. "But bear in mind, if you please, that our respective parents underwent persecution and proscription from diametrically opposite principles; in proof of which I may remark that while my family remained among the stanchest adherents of the exiled princes, your father lost no time in joining the new government; and that after the Citizen Noirtier had become a Girondin, the Count Noirtier appeared as a senator and statesman."

"Dear mother," interposed Renée, "you know very well it was agreed that all these disagreeable reminiscences should for ever be laid aside."

"Suffer me also, madame, to add my earnest request that you will kindly allow the veil of oblivion to cover and conceal the past. What avails retrospection and recrimination touching circumstances wholly past recall? For my own part I have laid aside even the name of my father, and altogether disown his political principles. He was—nay, probably may still be—a Bonapartist, and is called Noirtier; I, on the contrary, am a stanch royalist, and style myself De Villefort. Let what may remain of revolutionary sap exhaust itself and die away with the old trunk, and condescend only to regard the

young shoot which has started up at a distance from the parent tree, without having the power, any more than the wish, to separate entirely from the stock from which it sprang."

"Bravo, Villefort," cried the marquis; "excellently well said! Come, now, I have hopes of obtaining what I have been for years endeavouring to persuade the marquise to promise—namely, a perfect amnesty and forgetfulness of the past."

"With all my heart," replied the marquise; "let the past be forgotten. I promise you it affords *me* as little pleasure to revive it as it does you. All I ask is, that Villefort will be firm and inflexible for the future in marking his political principles. Remember also, Villefort, that we have pledged ourselves to his majesty for your fealty and strict loyalty, and that at our recommendation the king consented to forget the past, as I do" (and here she extended to him her hand)—"as I now do at your entreaty. But bear in mind, that should there fall in your way any one guilty of conspiring against the government, you will be so much the more bound to visit the offence with rigorous punishment, as it is known you belong to a suspected family."

"Alas, madame," returned Villefort, "my profession, as well as the times in which we live, compels me to be severe. I have already successfully conducted several public prosecutions, and brought the offenders to merited punishment. But we have not done with the thing yet."

"Do you indeed think so?" inquired the marquise.

"I am at least fearful of it. Napoleon, in the island of Elba, is too near France, and his proximity keeps up the hopes of his partisans. Marseilles is filled with half-pay officers, who are daily, under one frivolous pretext or other, getting up quarrels with the royalists; from hence arise continual and fatal duels among the higher classes of persons, and assassinations in the lower."

"Oh! M. de Villefort," cried a beautiful young creature, daughter to Count Salvieux, and the cherished

friend of Mademoiselle de Saint-Méran, "do try and get up some famous trial while we are at Marseilles. I never was in a law-court; I am told it is so very amusing."

"Amusing, certainly," replied the young man, "inasmuch as, instead of shedding tears as at the fictitious tale of woe produced at a theatre, you behold in a law-court a case of real and genuine distress—a drama of life. The prisoner whom you there see pale, agitated, and alarmed, instead of—as is the case when the curtain falls on a tragedy—going home to sup peacefully with his family, and then retiring to rest, that he may recommence his mimic woes on the morrow, is removed from your sight merely to be reconducted to his prison and delivered up to the executioner. I leave you to judge how far your nerves are calculated to bear you through such a scene. Of this, however, be assured, that should any favourable opportunity present itself, I will not fail to offer you the choice of being present at it."

"For shame, M. de Villefort!" said Renée, becoming quite pale; "don't you see how you are frightening us?—and yet you laugh."

"Why, I stand almost in the light of one engaged in a duel. I have already recorded sentence of death five or six times against the movers of political conspiracies, and who can say how many daggers may be ready sharpened, and only waiting a favourable opportunity to be buried in my heart?"

"Gracious heavens, M. de Villefort," said Renée, becoming more and more terrified, "you surely are not in earnest!"

"Indeed, I am," replied the young magistrate, with a smile. "And in the interesting trial that young lady is anxious to witness, the case would only be still more aggravated. Suppose, for instance, the prisoner, as is more than probable, to have served under Napoleon; well, can you expect for an instant that one accustomed, at the word of his commander, to rush fearlessly on the very bayonets of his foe, will scruple more to drive a

stiletto into the heart of one he knows to be his personal enemy than to slaughter his fellow-creatures, merely because bidden to do so by one he is bound to obey? Besides, one requires the excitement of being hateful in the eyes of the accused in order to lash oneself into a state of sufficient vehemence and power. I would not choose to see the man against whom I pleaded smile, as though in mockery of my words. No! my pride is to see the accused pale, agitated, and as though beaten out of all composure by the fire of my eloquence."

"Bravo!" cried one of the guests, "that is what I call talking to some purpose."

"Just the person we require at a time like the present," said a second.

"What a splendid business that last cause of yours was, my dear Villefort!" remarked a third. "I mean the trial of the man for murdering his father. Upon my word, you killed him ere the executioner had laid his hand upon him."

"Oh! as for parricides and such dreadful people as that," interposed Renée, "it matters very little what is done to them; but as regards poor unfortunate creatures whose only crime consists in having mixed themselves up in political intrigues——"

"Why, that is the very worst offence they could possibly commit; for, don't you see, Renée, the king is the father of his people, and he who shall plot or contrive aught against the life and safety of the parent of thirty-two millions of souls is a parricide upon a fearfully great scale?"

"I don't know anything about that," replied Renée; "but, M. de Villefort, you have promised me, have you not, always to show mercy to those I plead for?"

"Make yourself quite easy on that point," answered Villefort, with one of his sweetest smiles; "you and I will always consult upon our verdicts."

"My love," said the marquise, "attend to your doves, your lapdogs, and embroidery, but do not meddle with

what you understand not. Nowadays the military profession has rest, and its brave sons repose under their well-earned laurels. Now is the time for those of the long robe, like M. de Villefort, to achieve a splendid notoriety; seek not, therefore, to cross the brilliant career your betrothed husband may otherwise pursue."

"Well," said Renée, "I cannot help regretting you had not chosen some other profession than your own—a physician, for instance. Do you know I always felt a shudder at the idea of even a *destroying* angel?"

"Dear, good Renée!" whispered Villefort, as he gazed with unutterable tenderness on the lovely speaker.

"Let us hope, my child," cried the marquis, "that M. de Villefort may prove the moral and political physician of this province; if so, he will have achieved a noble work."

"And one which will go far to efface the recollection of his father's conduct," added the incorrigible marquise.

"Madame," replied Villefort, with a mournful smile, "I have already had the honour to observe that my father has (at least I hope so) abjured his past errors, and that he is at the present moment a firm and zealous friend to religion and order, a better royalist possibly than his son, for he has to atone for past dereliction, while I have no other impulse than warm, decided preference and conviction."

Having made this well-turned speech, Villefort looked carefully round to mark the effect of his oratory, much as he would have done had he been addressing the bench in open court.

"Do you know, my dear Villefort," cried the Count de Salvieux, "that is as nearly as possible what I myself said the other day at the Tuileries, when questioned by his majesty's principal chamberlain, touching the singularity of an alliance between the son of a Girondin and the daughter of an officer of the Duke de Condé; and I assure you he seemed fully to comprehend that this mode of reconciling political differences was based upon

sound and excellent principles. Then the king, who, without our suspecting it, had overheard our conversation, interrupted us by saying, 'Villefort'—observe that the king did not pronounce the word Noirtier, but, on the contrary, placed considerable emphasis on that of Villefort—'Villefort,' said his majesty, 'is a young man of great judgment and discretion, who will be sure to make a figure in his profession. I like him much, and it gave me great pleasure to hear that he was about to become the son-in-law of M. le Marquis and Madame la Marquise de Saint-Méran. I should myself have recommended the match, had not the noble marquis anticipated my wishes by requesting my consent to it.'"

"Is it possible the king could have condescended so far as to express himself so favourably of me?" asked the enraptured Villefort.

"I give you his very words; and if the marquis chooses to be candid, he will confess that they perfectly agree with what his majesty said to him when he went six months ago to consult him upon the subject of your espousing his daughter."

"Certainly," answered the marquis; "you state but the truth."

"How much do I owe this gracious prince! What is there I would not do to evince my earnest gratitude?"

"That is right," cried the marquise. "I love to see you thus. Now, then, were a conspirator to fall into your hands he would be most welcome."

"For my part, dear mother," interposed Renée, "I trust your wishes will not prosper, and that Providence will only permit petty offenders, poor debtors, and miserable cheats to fall into M. de Villefort's hands, then I shall be contented."

"Just the same as though you prayed that a physician might only be called upon to prescribe for headaches, measles, and the stings of wasps, or any other slight affection of the epidermis. If you wish to see me the king's procureur, you must desire for me some of those

violent and dangerous diseases from the cure of which so much honour redounds to the physician."

At this moment, and as though the utterance of Villefort's wish had sufficed to effect its accomplishment, a servant entered the room and whispered a few words in his ear. Villefort immediately rose from table and quitted the room upon the plea of urgent business; he soon, however, returned, his whole face beaming with delight.

Renée regarded him with fond affection, and certainly his handsome features, lit up as they then were with more than usual fire and animation, seemed formed to excite the innocent admiration with which she gazed on her graceful and intelligent lover.

"You were wishing just now," said Villefort, addressing her, "that I were a doctor instead of a lawyer. Well, I at least resemble the disciples of Esculapius in one thing—that of not being able to call a day my own, not even that of my betrothal."

"And wherefore were you called away just now?" asked Mademoiselle de Saint-Méran, with an air of deep interest.

"For a very serious affair, which bids well to afford our executioner here some work."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Renée, her cheeks, that were before glowing with emotion, becoming pale as marble.

"Is it possible?" burst simultaneously from all who were near enough to the magistrate to hear his words.

"Why, if my information prove correct, a sort of Bonaparte conspiracy has just been discovered."

"Can I believe my ears?" cried the marquise.

"I will read you the letter containing the accusation at least," said Villefort:—

"'The procureur du roi is informed by a friend to the throne and the religious institutions of his country that an individual, named Edmond Dantès, second in command on board the *Pharaon*, this day arrived from Smyrna, after having touched at Naples and Porto-

Ferrajo, has been the bearer of a letter from Murat to the usurper, and again taken charge of another letter from the usurper to the Bonapartist club in Paris. Ample corroboration of this statement may be obtained by arresting the above-mentioned Edmond Dantès, who either carries the letter for Paris about with him, or has it at his father's abode. Should it not be found in the possession of father or son, then it will assuredly be discovered in the cabin belonging to the said Dantès, on board the *Pharaon*.' "

"But," said Renée, "this letter, which, after all, is but an anonymous scrawl, is not even addressed to you, but to the procureur du roi."

"True; but that gentleman being absent, his secretary, by his orders, opened his letters; thinking this one of importance, he sent for me, but not finding me, took upon himself to give the necessary orders for arresting the accused party."

"Then the guilty person is absolutely in custody?" said the marquise.

"Nay, dear mother, say the accused person. You know we cannot yet pronounce him guilty."

"He is in safe custody," answered Villefort; "and, rely upon it, if the letter alluded to is found, he will not be likely to be trusted abroad again, unless he goes forth under the especial protection of the headsman."

"And where is the unfortunate being?" asked Renée.

"He is at my house."

"Come, come, my friend," interrupted the marquis, "do not neglect your duty to linger with us. You are the king's servant, and must go whithersoever that service calls you."

"Oh, Villefort!" cried Renée, clasping her hands and looking towards her lover with piteous earnestness, "be merciful on this the day of our betrothal."

The young man passed round to the side of the table where the fair pleader sat, and leaning over her chair said tenderly,—

"To give you pleasure, my sweet Renée, I promise to show all the lenity in my power; but if the charges brought against this Bonapartean hero prove correct, why, then, you really must give me leave to order his head to be cut off."

Renée, with an almost convulsive shudder, turned away her head as though the very mention of killing a fellow-creature in cold blood was more than her tender nature could endure.

"Never mind that foolish girl, Villefort," said the marquise; "she will soon get over these things."

So saying, Madame de Saint-Méran extended her dry, bony hand to Villefort, who, while imprinting a son-in-law's respectful salute on it, looked at Renée, as much as to say, "I must try and fancy 'tis your dear hand I kiss, as it should have been."

"These are mournful auspices to accompany a betrothal," sighed poor Renée.

"Upon my word, child," exclaimed the angry marquise, "your folly exceeds all bounds. I should be glad to know what connection there can possibly be between your sickly sentimentality and the affairs of state."

"Oh, mother!" murmured Renée.

"Nay, madame, I pray you pardon this little traitor. I promise you, that to make up for her want of loyalty I will be most inflexibly severe;" and casting an expressive glance at his betrothed, which seemed to say, "Fear not, for your dear sake my justice shall be tempered with mercy," and receiving a sweet and approving smile in return, Villefort quitted the room.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EXAMINATION.

No sooner had Villefort left the salon than he assumed the grave air of a man who holds the balance of life

and death in his hands. Except the recollection of the line of politics his father had adopted, and which might interfere, unless he acted with the greatest prudence, with his own career, Villefort was as happy as a man could be. Already rich, he held a high official situation, though only twenty-seven. He was about to marry a young and charming woman, and besides her personal attractions—which were very great—Mademoiselle de Saint-Méran's family possessed considerable political influence, which they would, of course, exert in his favour. The dowry of his wife amounted to six thousand pounds, besides the prospect of inheriting twenty thousand more at her father's death.

At the door he met the commissary of police, who was waiting for him. The sight of this officer recalled Villefort from the third heaven to earth. He composed his face as we have before described, and said, "I have read the letter, monsieur, and you have acted rightly in arresting this man; now inform me what you have discovered concerning him and the conspiracy."

"We know nothing as yet of the conspiracy, monsieur. All the papers found have been sealed up and placed on your bureau. The prisoner himself is named Edmond Dantès, mate on board the three-master the *Pharaon*, trading in cotton with Alexandria and Smyrna, and belonging to Morrel and Son of Marseilles"

"Before he entered the navy had he ever served in the marines?"

"Oh no, monsieur; he is very young"

"How old?"

"Nineteen or twenty at the most."

At this moment, and as Villefort had arrived at the corner of the Rue des Conseiles, a man, who seemed to have been waiting for him, approached. It was M. Morrel.

"Ah, M. de Villefort," cried he, "I am delighted to see you. Some of your people have committed the strangest mistake. They have just arrested Edmond Dantès, the mate of my ship."

"I know it, monsieur," replied Villefort, "and I am now going to examine him."

"Oh," said Morrel, carried away by his friendship, "you do not know him, and I do. He is the most estimable, the most trustworthy creature in the world, and I will venture to say there is not a better seaman in all the merchant service. Oh, M. de Villefort, I beseech your indulgence for him."

Villefort, as we have seen, belonged to the aristocratic party at Marseilles, Morrel to the plebeian. The first was a royalist, the other suspected of Bonapartism. Villefort looked disdainfully at Morrel, and replied,—

"You are aware, monsieur, that a man may be estimable and trustworthy in private life, and the best seaman in the merchant service, and yet be, politically speaking, a great criminal. Is it not true?"

The magistrate laid emphasis on these words, as if he wished to apply them to the owner himself, whilst his eyes seemed to plunge into the heart of him who, whilst he interceded for another, had himself need of indulgence. Morrel reddened, for his own conscience was not quite clear on politics; besides, what Dantès had told him of his interview with the grand marshal, and what the emperor had said to him, embarrassed him. He replied, however,—

"I entreat you, M. de Villefort, be, as you always are, kind and equitable, and give him back to us soon."

This *give us* sounded revolutionary in the sub-prefect's ears.

"Ah, ah!" murmured he, "is Dantès, then, a member of some Carbonari society, that his protector thus employs the collective form? He was, if I recollect, arrested in a cabaret, in company with a great many others." Then he added, "Monsieur, you may rest assured I shall perform my duty impartially, and that if he be innocent you shall not have appealed to me in vain. Should he, however, be guilty, in this present epoch impunity would furnish a dangerous example, and I must do my duty."

As he had now arrived at the door of his own house, which adjoined the Palais de Justice, he entered, after having saluted the shipowner, who stood, as if petrified, on the spot where Villefort had left him.

The antechamber was full of agents of police and gendarmes, in the midst of whom, carefully watched, but calm and smiling, stood the prisoner. Villefort traversed the antechamber, cast a side glance at Dantès, and taking a packet which a gendarme offered him, disappeared, saying, "Bring in the prisoner."

Rapid as had been Villefort's glance, it had served to give him an idea of the man he was about to interrogate. He had recognized intelligence in the high forehead, courage in the dark eye and bent brow, and frankness in the thick lips that showed a set of pearly teeth.

Villefort's first impression was favourable, but he had been so often warned to mistrust first impulses that he applied the maxim to the impression, forgetting the difference between the two words. He stifled, therefore, the feelings of compassion that were rising, composed his features, and sat down at his bureau. An instant after, Dantès entered.

He was pale, but calm and collected, and saluting his judge with easy politeness, looked round for a seat, as if he had been in the salon of M. Morrel.

It was then that he encountered for the first time Villefort's look, that look peculiar to justice, which, whilst it seems to read the culprit's thoughts, betrays nought of its own.

"Who and what are you?" demanded Villefort, turning over a pile of papers, containing information relative to the prisoner that an agent of police had given to him on his entry.

"My name is Edmond Dantès," replied the young man calmly. "I am mate of the *Pharaon*, belonging to Messrs. Morrel and Son."

"Your age?" continued Villefort.

"Nineteen," returned Dantès.

"What were you doing at the moment you were arrested?"

"I was at the festival of my marriage, monsieur," said the young man, his voice slightly tremulous, so great was the contrast between that happy moment and the painful ceremony he was now undergoing; so great was the contrast between the sombre aspect of M. de Villefort and the radiant face of Mercédès.

"You were at the festival of your marriage?" said the deputy, shuddering in spite of himself.

"Yes, monsieur. I am on the point of marrying a young girl I have been attached to for three years."

Villefort, impassive as he was, was struck with this coincidence; and the tremulous voice of Dantès, surprised in the midst of his happiness, struck a sympathetic chord in his own bosom. He also was on the point of being married, and he was summoned from his own happiness to destroy that of another.

This philosophic reflection, thought he, will make a great sensation at M. de Saint-Méran's, and he arranged mentally, whilst Dantès awaited further questions, the antithesis by which orators often create a reputation for eloquence.

When this speech was arranged, Villefort turned to Dantès.

"Continue, sir," said he.

"What would you have me continue?"

"To give all the information in your power."

"Tell me on which point you desire information, and I will tell all I know; only," added he, with a smile, "I warn you I know very little."

"Have you served under the usurper?"

"I was about to be incorporated in the royal marines when he fell."

"It is reported your political opinions are extreme," said Villefort, who had never heard anything of the kind, but was not sorry to make this inquiry, as if it were an accusation.

"My political opinions!" replied Dantès. "Alas! sir, I never had any opinions. I am hardly nineteen; I know nothing; I have no part to play. If I obtain the situation I desire, I shall owe it to M. Morrel. Thus all my opinions—I will not say public, but private—are confined to these three sentiments: I love my father, I respect M. Morrel, and I adore Mercédès. This, sir, is all I can tell you, and you see how uninteresting it is."

As Dantès spoke, Villefort gazed at his ingenuous and open countenance, and recollected the words of Renée, who, without knowing who the culprit was, had besought his indulgence for him. With the deputy's knowledge of crime and criminals, every word the young man uttered convinced him more and more of his innocence.

"*Pardieu!*" said Villefort, "he is a noble fellow! I hope I shall gain Renée's favour easily by obeying the first command she ever imposed on me. I shall have at least a pressure of the hand in public and a sweet kiss in private."

Full of this idea, Villefort's face became so joyous that when he turned to Dantès, the latter, who had watched the change on his physiognomy, was smiling also.

"Sir," said Villefort, "have you any enemies, at least that you know?"

"I have enemies!" replied Dantès; "my position is not sufficiently elevated for that. As for my character, that is, perhaps, somewhat too hasty; but I have striven to repress it. I have had ten or twelve sailors under me, and if you question them, they will tell you that they love and respect me, not as a father, for I am too young, but as an elder brother."

"But instead of enemies you may have excited jealousy. You are about to become captain at nineteen, an elevated post. You are about to marry a pretty girl, who loves you, and these two pieces of good fortune may have excited the envy of some one."

"You are right. You know men better than I do, and what you say may possibly be the case, I confess.

I prefer not knowing them, because then I should be forced to hate them."

"You are wrong. You should always strive to see clearly around you. You seem a worthy young man. I will depart from the strict line of my duty to aid you in discovering the author of this accusation. Here is the paper; do you know the writing?"

As he spoke, Villefort drew the letter from his pocket and presented it to Dantès. Dantès read it. A cloud passed over his brow as he said,—

"No, monsieur, I do not know the writing, and yet it is tolerably plain. Whoever did it writes well. I am very fortunate," added he, looking gratefully at Villefort, "to be examined by such a man as you, for this envious person is a real enemy."

And by the rapid glance that the young man's eyes shot forth, Villefort saw how much energy lay hid beneath this mildness.

"Now," said the deputy, "answer me frankly, not as a prisoner to a judge, but as one man to another who takes an interest in him, what truth is there in the accusation contained in this anonymous letter?"

And Villefort threw disdainfully on his bureau the letter Dantès had just given back to him.

"None at all. I will tell you the real facts. I swear by my honour as a sailor, by my love for Mercédès, by the life of my father——"

"Speak, monsieur," said Villefort. Then, internally, "If Renée could see me, I hope she would be satisfied, and would no longer call me a decapitator."

"Well, when we quitted Naples, Captain Leclere was attacked with a brain fever. As we had no doctor on board, and he was so anxious to arrive at Elba that he would not touch at any other port, his disorder rose to such a height that at the end of the third day, feeling he was dying, he called me to him. 'My dear Dantès,' said he, 'swear to perform what I am going to tell you, for it is a matter of the deepest importance.'

"'I swear, captain,' replied I.

"'Well, as after my death the command devolves on you as mate, assume the command, and bear up for the Isle of Elba, disembark at Porto-Ferrajo, ask for the grand marshal, give him this letter. Perhaps they will give you another letter, and charge you with a commission. You will accomplish what I was to have done, and derive all the honour and profit from it.'

"'I will do it, captain; but perhaps I shall not be admitted to the grand marshal's presence as easily as you expect?'

"'Here is a ring that will obtain audience of him, and remove every difficulty,' said the captain.

"At these words he gave me a ring.

"It was time. Two hours after, he was delirious; the next day he died."

"And what did you do then?"

"What I ought to have done, and what every one would have done in my place. Everywhere the last requests of a dying man are sacred; but amongst sailors the last requests of his superior are commands. I sailed for the Isle of Elba, where I arrived the next day. I ordered everybody to remain on board, and went on shore alone. As I had expected, I found some difficulty in obtaining access to the grand marshal; but I sent the ring I had received from the captain to him, and was instantly admitted. He questioned me concerning Captain Leclere's death; and, as the latter had told me, gave me a letter to carry on to a person in Paris. I undertook it, because it was what my captain had bade me do. I landed here, regulated the affairs of the vessel, and hastened to visit my affianced bride, whom I found more lovely than ever. Thanks to M. Morrel, all the forms were got over; in a word, I was, as I told you, at my marriage feast, and I should have been married in an hour, and to-morrow I intended to start for Paris."

"Ah!" said Villefort, "this seems to me the truth. If you have been culpable, it was imprudence, and this

imprudence was legitimized by the orders of your captain. Give up this letter you have brought from Elba, and pass your word you will appear should you be required, and go and rejoin your friends."

"I am free, then, sir?" cried Dantès joyfully.

"Yes; but first give me this letter."

"You have it already, for it was taken from me with some others which I see in that packet."

"Stop a moment," said the deputy, as Dantès took his hat and gloves. "To whom is it addressed?"

"To Monsieur Noirtier, Rue Coq-Héron, Paris."

Had a thunderbolt fallen into the room, Villefort could not have been more stupefied. He sank into his seat, and hastily turning over the packet, drew forth the fatal letter, at which he glanced with an expression of terror.

"M. Noirtier, Rue Coq-Héron, No. 13," murmured he, growing still paler.

"Yes," said Dantès; "do you, then, know him?"

"No," replied Villefort; "a faithful servant of the king does not know conspirators."

"It is a conspiracy, then?" asked Dantès, who, after believing himself free, now began to feel a tenfold alarm. "I have already told you, however, sir, I was ignorant of the contents of the letter."

"Yes; but you knew the name of the person to whom it was addressed?" said Villefort.

"I was forced to read the address to know to whom to give it."

"Have you shown this letter to any one?" asked Villefort, becoming still more pale.

"To no one, on my honour."

"Everybody is ignorant that you are the bearer of a letter from the Isle of Elba, and addressed to M. Noirtier?"

"Everybody, except the person who gave it to me."

"This is too much," murmured Villefort.

Villefort's brow darkened more and more; his white lips and clenched teeth filled Dantès with apprehension.

After reading the letter, Villefort covered his face with his hands.

"Oh!" said Dantès timidly, "what is the matter?"

Villefort made no answer, but raised his head at the expiration of a few seconds, and again perused the letter.

"You give me your honour that you are ignorant of the contents of this letter?"

"I give you my honour, sir," said Dantès; "but what is the matter? You are ill. Shall I ring for assistance? Shall I call?"

"No," said Villefort, rising hastily; "stay where you are. It is for me to give orders here, and not you."

"Monsieur," replied Dantès proudly, "it was only to summon assistance for you."

"I want none—it was a temporary indisposition. Attend to yourself—answer me."

Dantès waited, expecting a question, but in vain. Villefort fell back on his chair, passed his hand over his brow, moist with perspiration, and, for the third time, read the letter.

"Oh, if he knows the contents of this!" murmured he, "and that Noirtier is the father of Villefort, I am lost!" And he fixed his eyes upon Edmond as if he would have penetrated his thoughts.

"Oh, it is impossible to doubt it!" cried he suddenly.

"In heaven's name," cried the unhappy young man, "if you doubt me, question me. I will answer you."

Villefort made a violent effort, and in a tone he strove to render firm,—

"Sir," said he, "I am no longer able, as I had hoped, to restore you immediately to liberty. Before doing so I must consult the judge of instruction; but you see how I behave towards you."

"O monsieur," cried Dantès, "you have been rather a friend than a judge."

"Well, I must detain you some time longer, but I will strive to make it as short as possible. The principal charge against you is this letter, and you see——"

Villefort approached the fire, cast it in, and waited until it was entirely consumed.

"You see, I destroy it!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Dantès, "you are goodness itself."

"Listen," continued Villefort; "you can now have confidence in me after what I have done."

"Oh, order me, and I will obey."

"Listen! This is not an order, but a counsel I give you."

"Speak, and I will follow your advice."

"I shall detain you until this evening in the Palais de Justice. Should any one else interrogate you, do not breathe a word of this letter."

"I promise."

It was Villefort who seemed to entreat, and the prisoner who reassured him.

"You see," continued he, "the letter is destroyed; you and I alone knew of its existence. Should you, therefore, be questioned, deny all knowledge of it."

"Fear nothing; I will deny it."

"It was the only letter you had?"

"It was."

"Swear it."

"I swear it."

Villefort rang. An agent of police entered. Villefort whispered some words in his ear, to which the officer replied by a motion of his head.

"Follow him," said Villefort to Dantès.

Dantès saluted Villefort, and retired.

Hardly had the door closed than Villefort threw himself into a chair.

"Alas, alas!" murmured he, "if the procureur de roi had been at Marseilles I should have been ruined. This accursed letter would have destroyed all my hopes. Oh, my father, must your past career always interfere with my successes?"

Suddenly a light passed over his face, a smile played round his mouth, and his lips became unclenched.

"This will do," said he; "and from this letter, which might have ruined me, I will make my fortune."

And after having assured himself the prisoner was gone, the deputy procureur hasted to the house of his bride.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHÂTEAU D'IF.

THE commissary of police, as he traversed the ante-chamber, made a sign to two gendarmes, who placed themselves one on Dantès's right and the other on his left. A door that communicated with the Palais de Justice was opened, and they traversed a long range of gloomy corridors, whose appearance might have made even the boldest shudder.

The Palais de Justice communicated with the prison —a sombre edifice, that from its grated windows looks on the clock-tower of the Accoules.

After numberless windings, Dantès saw an iron door. The commissary knocked thrice, every blow seeming to Dantès as if struck on his heart. The door opened, the two gendarmes gently pushed him forward, and the door closed with a loud sound behind him. The air he inhaled was no longer pure, but thick and mephitic—he was in prison.

He was conducted to a tolerably neat chamber, but grated and barred, and its appearance, therefore, did not greatly alarm him; besides, the words of Villefort, who seemed to interest himself so much, resounded still in his ears like a promise of freedom.

It was four o'clock when Dantès was placed in this chamber. It was, as we have said, the 1st of March, and the prisoner was soon buried in darkness.

The obscurity augmented the acuteness of his hearing. At the slightest sound he rose and hastened to the door,

convinced they were about to liberate him, but the sound died away, and Dantès sank again into his seat.

At last, about ten o'clock, and just as Dantès began to despair, steps were heard in the corridor, a key turned in the lock, the bolts creaked, the massy oaken door flew open, and a flood of light from two torches pervaded the apartment.

By the torchlight Dantès saw the glittering sabres and carbines of four gendarmes. He had advanced at first, but stoppped at the sight of this fresh accession of force.

"Are you come to fetch me?" asked he.

"Yes," replied a gendarme.

"By the orders of the deputy of the king's procureur?"

"I believe so."

The conviction that they came from M. de Villefort relieved all Dantès's apprehensions. He advanced calmly, and placed himself in the centre of the escort.

A carriage waited at the door, the coachman was on the box, and an exempt seated behind him.

"Is this carriage for me?" said Dantès.

"It is for you," replied a gendarme.

Dantès was about to speak, but feeling himself urged forward, and having neither the power nor the intention to resist, he mounted the steps, and was in an instant seated inside between two gendarmes; the two others took their places opposite, and the carriage rolled heavily over the stones.

The prisoner glanced at the windows; they were grated. He had changed his prison for another that was conveying him he knew not whither. Through the grating, however, Dantès saw they were passing through the Rue Caisserie, and by the Quay Saint-Laurent and the Rue Taramis, to the port.

The carriage stopped, the exempt descended, approached the guard-house, a dozen soldiers came out and formed themselves in order. Dantès saw the reflection of their muskets by the light of the lamps on the quay.

"Can all this force be summoned on my account?" thought he.

The exempt opened the door, which was locked, and, without speaking a word, answered Dantès's question, for he saw between the ranks of the soldiers a passage formed from the carriage to the port.

The two gendarmes who were opposite to him descended first, then he was ordered to alight, and the gendarmes on each side of him followed his example. They advanced towards a boat, which a custom-house officer held by a chain, near the quay.

The soldiers looked at Dantès with an air of stupid curiosity. In an instant he was placed in the stern-sheets of the boat between the gendarmes, whilst the exempt stationed himself at the bow; a shove sent the boat adrift, and four sturdy oarsmen impelled it rapidly towards the Pilon. At a shout from the boat the chain that closes the mouth of the port was lowered, and in a second they were outside the harbour.

The prisoner's first feeling was joy at again breathing the pure air, for air is freedom; but he soon sighed, for he passed before La Réserve, where he had that morning been so happy, and now through the open windows came the laughter and revelry of a ball.

Dantès folded his hands, raised his eyes to heaven, and prayed fervently.

The boat continued her voyage. They had passed the Tête de More, were now in front of the lighthouse, and about to double the battery. This manœuvre was incomprehensible to Dantès.

"Whither are you taking me?" asked he.

"You will soon know."

"But still——"

"We are forbidden to give you any explanation."

Dantès knew that nothing would be more absurd than to question subordinates who were forbidden to reply, and remained silent.

They had left the Ile Ratonneau, where the lighthouse

stood on the right, and were now opposite the Point des Catalans. It seemed to the prisoner that he could distinguish a female form on the beach, for it was there Mercédès dwelt.

How was it that a presentiment did not warn Mercédès her lover was near her?

One light alone was visible, and Dantès recognized it as coming from the chamber of Mercédès. A loud cry could be heard by her. He did not utter it. What would his guards think if they heard him shout like a madman?

He remained silent, his eyes fixed upon the light. The boat went on, but the prisoner only thought of Mercédès. A rising ground hid the light. Dantès turned and perceived they had got out to sea. Whilst he had been absorbed in thought they had hoisted the sail.

In spite of his repugnance to address the guards, Dantès turned to the nearest gendarme, and taking his hand,—

"Comrade," said he, "I adjure you as a Christian and a soldier, to tell me where we are going. I am Captain Dantès, a loyal Frenchman, though accused of treason. Tell me where you are conducting me, and I promise you on my honour I will submit to my fate."

The gendarme looked irresolutely at his companion, who returned for answer a sigh that said, "I see no great harm in telling him now;" and the gendarme replied,—

"You are a native of Marseilles and a sailor, and yet you do not know where you are going?"

"On my honour, I have no idea."

"That is impossible."

"I swear to you it is true. Tell me, I entreat."

"But my orders."

"Your orders do not forbid your telling me what I must know in ten minutes, in half an hour, or an hour. You see I cannot escape, even if I intended."

"Unless you are blind, or have never been outside the harbour, you must know."

"I do not."

"Look round you, then."

Dantès rose and looked forward, when he saw rise within a hundred yards of him the black and frowning rock on which stands the Château d'If. This gloomy fortress, which has for more than three hundred years furnished food for so many wild legends, seemed to Dantès like a scaffold to a malefactor.

"The Château d'If!" cried he, "what are we going there for?"

The gendarme smiled.

"I am not going there to be imprisoned," said Dantès. "It is only used for political prisoners. I have committed no crime. Are there any magistrates or judges at the Château d'If?"

"There are only," said the gendarme, "a governor, a garrison, turnkeys, and good thick walls. Come, come, do not look so astonished, or you will make me think you are laughing at me in return for my good nature."

Dantès pressed the gendarme's hand as though he would crush it.

"You think, then," said he, "that I am conducted to the château to be imprisoned there?"

"It is probable; but there is no occasion to squeeze so hard."

"Without any formality?"

"All the formalities have been gone through."

"In spite of M. de Villefort's promises?"

"I do not know what M. de Villefort promised you," said the gendarme; "but I know we are taking you to the Château d'If. But what are you doing? Help! comrades, help!"

By a rapid movement, which the gendarme's practised eye had perceived, Dantès sprang forward to precipitate himself into the sea, but four vigorous arms seized him as his feet quitted the flooring of the boat. He fell back foaming with rage.

"Good!" said the gendarme, placing his knee on his chest. "Believe soft-spoken gentlemen again! Hark ye,

my friend, I have disobeyed my first order, but I will not disobey the second, and if you move I lodge a bullet in your brain."

And he levelled his carbine at Dantès, who felt the muzzle touch his head.

For a moment the idea of struggling crossed his mind, and so ending the unexpected evil that had overtaken him. But he bethought him of M. de Villefort's promise; and, besides, death in a boat from the hand of a gendarme seemed too terrible. He remained motionless, but gnashing his teeth with fury.

At this moment a violent shock made the bark tremble. One of the sailors leaped on shore, a cord creaked as it ran through a pulley, and Dantès guessed they were at the end of the voyage.

His guardians, taking hold of his arms, forced him to rise, and dragged him towards the steps that lead to the gate of the fortress, whilst the exempt followed, armed with a carbine and bayonet.

Dantès made no resistance. He was like a man in a dream—he saw soldiers who stationed themselves on the sides—he felt himself forced up fresh stairs—he perceived he passed through a door, and the door closed behind him; but all this as mechanically as through a mist, nothing distinctly.

They halted for a minute, during which he strove to collect his thoughts. He looked around—he was in a court surrounded by high walls—he heard the measured tread of sentinels, and as they passed before the light he saw the barrels of their muskets shine.

They waited upwards of ten minutes. Certain Dantès could not escape, the gendarmes released him; they seemed awaiting orders. The orders arrived.

"Where is the prisoner?" said a voice.

"Here," replied the gendarmes.

"Let him follow me. I am going to conduct him to his room."

"Go!" said the gendarmes, pushing Dantès.

The prisoner followed his conductor, who led him into a room almost underground, whose bare and reeking walls seemed as though impregnated with tears; a lamp placed on a stool illumined the apartment faintly and showed Dantès the features of his conductor, an under-jailer, ill-clothed, and of sullen appearance.

"Here is your chamber for to-night," said he. "It is late, and Monsieur le Gouverneur is asleep; to-morrow, perhaps, he may change you. In the meantime there is bread, water, and fresh straw, and that is all a prisoner can wish for. Good-night."

And before Dantès could open his mouth, before he had noticed where the jailer placed his bread or the water, before he had glanced towards the corner where the straw was, the jailer disappeared, taking with him the lamp.

Dantès was alone in darkness and in silence, cold as the shadows that he felt breathe on his burning forehead.

With the first dawn of day the jailer returned, with orders to leave Dantès where he was. He found the prisoner in the same position, as if fixed there, his eyes swollen with weeping.

He had passed the night standing and without sleep.

The jailer advanced; Dantès appeared not to perceive him.

He touched him on the shoulder. Edmond started.

"Have you not slept?" said the jailer.

"I do not know," replied Dantès.

The jailer stared.

"Are you hungry?" continued he.

"I do not know."

"Do you wish for anything?"

"I wish to see the governor."

The jailer shrugged his shoulders, and left the chamber.

Dantès followed him with his eyes, and stretched forth his hands towards the open door; but the door closed.

All his emotion then burst forth; he cast himself on the ground, weeping bitterly, and asking himself what crime he had committed that he was thus punished.

The day passed thus. He scarcely tasted food, but walked round and round the cell like a wild beast in its cage.

One thought in particular tormented him—namely, that during his journey hither he had sat so still, whereas he might, a dozen times, have plunged into the sea, and, thanks to his powers of swimming, for which he was famous, have gained the shore, concealed himself until the arrival of a Genoese or Spanish vessel, and escaped to Spain or Italy, where Mercédès and his father could have joined him. He had no fears as to how he should live; good seamen are welcome everywhere; he spoke Italian like a Tuscan, and Spanish like a Castilian; he would have then been happy, whereas he was now confined in the Château d'If, ignorant of the future destiny of his father and Mercédès; and all this because he had trusted to Villefort's promise. The thought was maddening, and Dantès threw himself furiously down on his straw.

The next morning the jailer made his appearance.

"Well," said the jailer, "are you more reasonable to-day?"

Dantès made no reply.

"Come, take courage; do you want anything in my power to do for you?"

"I wish to see the governor."

"I have already told you it was impossible."

"Why so?"

"Because it is not allowed by the rules."

"What is allowed, then?"

"Better fare, if you pay for it, books, and leave to walk about."

"I do not want books, I am satisfied with my food, and I do not care to walk about; but I wish to see the governor."

"If you worry me by repeating the same thing I will not bring you any more to eat."

"Well, then," said Edmond, "if you do not, I shall die of famine, that is all."

The jailer saw by his tone he would be happy to die; and, as every prisoner is worth sixpence a day to his jailer, he replied in a more subdued tone,—

"What you ask is impossible; but if you are very well-behaved you will be allowed to walk about, and some day you will meet the governor, and if he chooses to reply, that is his affair."

"But," asked Dantès, "how long shall I have to wait?"

"Ah! a month—six months—a year."

"It is too long a time. I wish to see him at once."

"Ah!" said the jailer, "do not always brood over what is impossible, or you will be mad in a fortnight."

"You think so?"

"Yes, we have an instance here; it was by always offering a million of francs to the governor for his liberty that an abbé became mad, who was in this chamber before you."

"How long has he left it?"

"Two years."

"Was he liberated then?"

"No; he was put in a dungeon."

"Listen!" said Dantès. "I am not an abbé. I am not mad; perhaps I shall be, but at present, unfortunately, I am not. I will make you another offer."

"What is that?"

"I do not offer you a million, because I have it not, but I will give you a hundred crowns if at the first time you go to Marseilles you will seek out a young girl, named Mercédès, at the Catalans, and give her two lines from me."

"If I took them, and were detected, I should lose my place, which is worth two thousand francs a year; so that I should be a great fool to run such a risk for three hundred."

"Well," said Dantès, "mark this—if you refuse, at least, to tell Mercédès I am here. I will some day hide

myself behind the door, and when you enter I will dash out your brains with this stool."

"Threats!" cried the jailer, retreating, and putting himself on the defensive; "you are certainly going mad. The abbé began like you, and in three days you will want a strait-waistcoat; but, fortunately, there are dungeons here."

Dantès whirled the stool round his head.

"Oh," said the jailer, "you shall see the governor at once."

"That is right," returned Dantès, dropping the stool, and sitting on it as if he were in reality mad.

The jailer went out, and returned in an instant with a corporal and four soldiers.

"By the governor's orders," said he, "conduct the prisoner to the story beneath."

"To the dungeon, then?" said the corporal.

"Yes; we must put the madmen with the madmen."

The soldiers seized Dantès, who followed passively.

He descended fifteen steps, and the door of a dungeon was opened, and he was thrust in.

The door closed, and Dantès advanced with outstretched hands until he touched the wall; he then sat down in the corner, until his eyes became accustomed to the darkness.

The jailer was right; Dantès wanted but little of being utterly mad.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EVENING OF THE BETROTHAL.

VILLEFORT had, as we have said, hastened back to the Place du Grand Cours, and on entering the house found all the guests in the salon at coffee. Renée was, with all the rest of the company, anxiously awaiting him, and his entrance was followed by a general exclamation.

"Well, Decapitator, Guardian of the State, Brutus, what is the matter?" said one.

"Are we threatened with a fresh Reign of Terror?" asked another.

"Has the Corsican ogre broken loose?" cried a third.

"Madame la Marquise," said Villefort, approaching his future mother-in-law, "I request your pardon for thus leaving you.—M. le Marquis, honour me by a few moments' private conversation."

"Ah! this affair is really serious, then?" asked the marquis, remarking the cloud on Villefort's brow.

"So serious that I must take leave of you for a few days; so," added he, turning to Renée, "judge for yourself if it be not important."

"You are going to leave us?" cried Renée, unable to hide her emotion.

"Alas!" returned Villefort, "I must."

"Where, then, are you going?" asked the marquise

"That, madame, is the secret of justice; but if you have any commissions for Paris, a friend of mine is going there to-night."

The guests looked at each other.

"You wish to speak to me alone?" said the marquis.

"Yes, let us go into your cabinet."

The marquis took his arm, and left the salon.

"Well," asked he, as soon as they were in his closet; "tell me, what is it?"

"An affair of the greatest importance, that demands my immediate presence in Paris. Now, excuse the indiscretion, marquis, but have you any funded property?"

"All my fortune is in the funds—seven or eight hundred thousand francs."

"Then sell out—sell out, marquis, as soon as you can."

"Eh! how can I sell out here?"

"You have a broker, have you not?"

"Yes."

"Then give me a letter to him, and tell him to sell out

without an instant's delay; perhaps even now I shall arrive too late."

"What say you?" said the marquis, "let us lose no time then."

And sitting down, he wrote a letter to his broker, ordering him to sell out at any loss.

"Now then," said Villefort, placing the letter in his pocket-book, "write another."

"To whom?"

"To the king."

"I dare not write to his majesty."

"I do not ask you to write to his majesty, but ask M. de Salvieux to do so. I want a letter that will enable me to reach the king's presence without all the formalities of demanding an audience, that would occasion a loss of time."

"But address yourself to the keeper of the seals; he has the right of entry, and can procure you audience."

"Doubtless; but there is no occasion to divide the merit of my discovery with him. The keeper would leave me in the background, and take all the honour to himself. I tell you, marquis, my fortune is made if I only reach the Tuileries the first, for the king will not forget the service I do him."

"In that case make your preparations, and I will write the letter."

"Be as quick as possible; I must be *en route* in a quarter of an hour."

"Make your carriage stop at the door."

"You will present my excuses to the marquise and Mademoiselle Renée, whom I leave on such a day with great regret."

"They are both in my room. You can say all this for yourself."

"A thousand thanks. Busy yourself with the letter."

The marquis rang; a servant entered.

"Inform the Count de Salvieux I am waiting for him."

"Now, then, go!" said the marquis.

"I only go for a few moments."

Villefort hastily quitted the apartment, but reflecting that the sight of the deputy procureur running through the streets would be enough to throw the whole city into confusion, he resumed his ordinary pace. At his door he perceived a figure in the shadow that seemed to wait for him. It was Mercédès, who, hearing no news of her lover, had come herself to inquire after him.

As Villefort drew near, she advanced and stood before him. Dantès had spoken of his bride, and Villefort instantly recognized her. Her beauty and high bearing surprised him, and when she inquired what had become of her lover, it seemed to him that she was the judge and he the accused.

"The young man you speak of," said Villefort abruptly, "is a great criminal, and I can do nothing for him, mademoiselle."

Mercédès burst into tears, and, as Villefort strove to pass her, again addressed him.

"But, at least, tell me where he is, that I may learn if he is alive or dead," said she.

"I do not know; he is no longer in my hands," replied Villefort.

And desirous of putting an end to the interview, he pushed by her, and closed the door, as if to exclude the pain he felt. But remorse is not thus banished; like the wounded hero of Virgil, the arrow remained in the wound, and, arrived at the salon, Villefort, in his turn, burst into tears, and sank into a chair.

The man he sacrificed to his ambition—that innocent victim he made pay the penalty of his father's faults—appeared to him pale and threatening, leading his affianced bride by the hand, and bringing with him remorse, not such as the ancients figured—furious and terrible—but that slow and consuming agony whose pangs cease only with life. Then he had a moment's hesitation. If at this moment the sweet voice of Renée had sounded in his ears pleading for mercy, or the fair

Mercédès had entered and said, "In the name of God, I conjure you to restore me my affianced husband," his cold and trembling hands would have signed his release; but no voice broke the stillness of the chamber, and the door was opened only by Villefort's valet, who came to tell him the travelling carriage was in readiness.

Villefort rose, or rather sprang, from his chair, hastily opened one of the drawers of his *sécrétaire*, emptied all the gold it contained into his pocket, stood motionless an instant, his hand pressed to his head, muttered a few inarticulate sounds, and then perceiving his servant had placed his cloak on his shoulders, he sprang into the carriage, ordering the postilions to go, Rue du Grand Cours, to the house of M. de Saint-Méran.

As the marquis had promised, Villefort found the letter. He started when he saw Renée, for he fancied she was again about to plead for Dantès. Alas! she was thinking only of Villefort's departure.

She loved Villefort, and he left her at the moment he was about to become her husband. Villefort knew not when he should return, and Renée, far from pleading for Dantès, hated the man whose crime separated her from her lover. What had Mercédès to say?

Mercédès had met Fernand at the corner of the Rue de la Loge; she had returned to the Catalans, and had despairingly cast herself on her couch. Fernand, kneeling by her side, took her hand, and covered it with kisses that Mercédès did not even feel.

She passed the night thus, and the day returned without her noticing it. Grief had made her blind to all but one object—that was Edmond.

"Ah! you are there," said she, at length.

"I have not quitted you since yesterday," returned Fernand sorrowfully.

M. Morrel had learned that Dantès had been conducted to prison, and he had gone to all his friends, and the influential persons of the city, but the report was already in circulation that Dantès was arrested as a Bonapartist

agent; and as the most sanguine looked upon any attempt of Napoleon to remount the throne as impossible, he met with nothing but refusal, and had returned home in despair.

Caderousse was equally restless and uneasy, but instead of seeking to aid Dantès, he had shut himself up with two bottles of wine, in the hope of drowning reflection. But he did not succeed, and became too intoxicated to fetch any more wine, and yet not so intoxicated as to forget what had happened.

Danglars alone was content and joyous; he had got rid of an enemy and preserved his situation on board the *Pharaon*. Danglars was one of those men born with a pen behind the ear, and an inkstand in place of a heart. Everything with him was multiplication or subtraction, and he estimated the life of a man as less precious than a figure, when that figure could increase, and that life would diminish, the total of the amount.

Villefort, after having received M. de Salvieux's letter, embraced Renée, kissed the marquise's hand, and shaken hands with the marquis, started for Paris.

Old Dantès was dying with anxiety to know what had become of Edmond.

CHAPTER X.

THE SMALL CABINET OF THE TUILERIES.

We will leave Villefort on the road to Paris, travelling with all speed, and penetrating the two or three apartments which precede it, enter the small cabinet of the Tuileries with the arched window, so well known as having been the favourite cabinet of Napoleon and Louis XVIII., as also that of Louis Philippe.

There, in this closet, seated before a walnut-tree table he had brought with him from Hartwell, and to which, from one of those fancies not uncommon to great people,

he was particularly attached, the King Louis XVIII. was carelessly listening to a man of fifty or fifty-two years of age, with gray hair, aristocratic bearing, and exceedingly gentlemanly attire, while he was making a note in a volume of Horace, Gryphius's edition, which was much indebted to the sagacious observations of the philosophical monarch.

"You say, sir——" said the king.

"That I am exceedingly disquieted, sire."

"Really, have you had a visit of the seven fat kine and seven lean kine?"

"No, sire, for that would only betoken for us seven years of plenty and seven years of scarcity, and with a king as full of foresight as your majesty scarcity is not a thing to be feared."

"Then of what other scourge are you afraid, my dear Blacas?"

"Sire, I have every reason to believe that a storm is brewing in the south."

"Well, my dear duke," replied Louis XVIII., "I think you are wrongly informed, and know positively that, on the contrary, it is very fine weather in that direction."

Man of ability as he was, Louis XVIII. liked a pleasant jest.

"Sire," continued M. de Blacas, "if it be only to reassure a faithful servant, will your majesty send into Languedoc, Provence, and Dauphiné, trusty men who will bring you back a faithful report as to the feeling in these three provinces?"

"*Canimus surdis*," replied the king, continuing the annotations in his Horace.

"Sire," replied the courtier, laughing in order that he might seem to comprehend the quotation, "your majesty may be perfectly right in relying on the good feeling of France, but I fear I am not altogether wrong in dreading some desperate attempt."

"By whom?"

"By Bonaparte, or, at least, his party."

"My dear Blacas," said the king, "you with your alarms prevent me from working."

"And you, sire, prevent me from sleeping with your security."

"Wait, my dear sir, wait a moment, for I have such a delightful note on the *Pastor quum traheret*—wait, and I will listen to you afterwards."

There was a brief pause, during which Louis XVIII. wrote, in a hand as small as possible, another note on the margin of his Horace, and then looking at the duke with the air of a man who thinks he has an idea of his own, whilst he is but commenting upon the idea of another, he said,—

"Go on, my dear duke, go on—I listen."

"Sire," said Blacas, who had for a moment the hope of sacrificing Villefort to his own profit, "I am compelled to tell you that these are not mere rumours destitute of foundation which thus disquiet me; but a reflective man, deserving all my confidence, and charged by me to watch over the south (the duke hesitated as he pronounced these words), has arrived post to tell me a great peril threatens the king, and then I hastened to you, sire."

"*Mala ducis avi domum*," continued Louis XVIII., still annotating.

"Does your majesty wish me to cease as to this subject?"

"By no means, dear duke; but just stretch out your hand."

"Which?"

"Whichever you please—there to the left."

"Here, sire?"

"I tell you to the left, and you seek the right—I mean on my right—yes, there. You will find the report of the minister of police of yesterday. But here is M. Dandré himself;" and M. Dandré, announced by the chamberlain in waiting, entered.

"Come in," said Louis XVIII., with an imperceptible smile—"come in, baron, and tell the duke all you know—the latest news of M. de Bonaparte. Do not conceal anything, however serious—let us see the island of Elba is a volcano, and we may expect to have issuing thence flaming and bristling war—*bella, horrida bella!*"

M. Dandré leaned very respectfully on the back of a chair with his two hands, and said,—

"Has your majesty perused yesterday's report?"

"Yes, yes; but tell the count himself, who cannot find anything, what the report contains—give him the particulars of what the usurper is doing in his islet."

"Monsieur," said the baron to the count, "all the servants of his majesty must approve of the latest intelligence which we have from the island of Elba. Bonaparte"—M. Dandré looked at Louis XVIII., who, employed in writing a note, did not even raise his head—"Bonaparte," continued the baron, "is mortally wearied, and passes whole days in watching his miners at work at Porto-Longone."

"And scratches himself for amusement," added the king.

"Scratches himself?" inquired the count. "What does your majesty mean?"

"Yes, indeed, my dear count. Did you forget that this great man, this hero, this demigod, is attacked with a malady of the skin which worries him to death—prurigo?"

"And, moreover, M. le Comte," continued the minister of police, "we are almost assured that in a very short time the usurper will be insane."

"Insane?"

"Insane to a degree; his head becomes weaker. Sometimes he weeps bitterly, sometimes laughs boisterously; at other times he passes hours on the seashore flinging stones into the water, and when the flint makes 'duck-and-drake' five or six times he appears as delighted as if he had gained another Marengo or Auster-

litz. Now you must agree these are indubitable symptoms of weakness?"

"Or of wisdom, M. le Baron—or of wisdom," said Louis XVIII., laughing. "The greatest captains of antiquity recreated themselves with casting pebbles into the ocean; see Plutarch's 'Life of Scipio Africanus.'"

M. de Blacas pondered deeply on this blind repose of monarch and minister. Villefort, who did not choose to reveal the whole secret, lest another should reap all the benefit of the disclosure, had yet communicated enough to cause him the greatest uneasiness.

"Well, well, Dandré," said Louis XVIII., "Blacas is not yet convinced. Let us proceed, therefore, to the usurper's conversion."

The minister of police bowed.

"The usurper's conversion!" murmured the count, looking at the king and Dandré, who spoke alternately, like Virgil's shepherds—"the usurper converted!"

"Decidedly, my dear count."

"In what way converted?"

"To good principles. Explain all about it, baron."

"Why, this it is, M. le Comte," said the minister with the gravest air in the world; "Napoleon lately had a review, and as two or three of his old veterans testified a desire to return to France, he gave them their dismissal, and exhorted them to 'serve the good king.' These were his own words, M. le Comte, I am certain of that."

"Well, Blacas, what think you of this?" inquired the king triumphantly, and pausing for a moment from the voluminous scholiast before him.

"I say, sire, that M. the minister of police or I am greatly deceived; and as it is impossible it can be the minister of police, as he has the guardianship of the safety and honour of your majesty, it is probable I am in error. However, sire, if I might advise, your majesty will interrogate the person of whom I spoke to you, and I will urge your majesty to do him this honour."

"Most willingly, count. Under your auspices I will receive any person you please, but with arms in hand. M. le Ministre, have you any report more recent than this, dated the 20th February, and this is the 4th of March?"

"No, sire, but I am hourly expecting one; it may have arrived since I left my office."

"Go thither, and if there be none—well, well," continued Louis XVIII., "make one. That is the usual way, is it not?" And the king laughed facetiously.

"O sire," replied the minister, "we have no occasion to invent any. Every day our desks are loaded with most circumstantial denunciations, coming from crowds of individuals who hope for some return of services which they seek to render, but cannot; they trust to fortune, and rely that some unexpected event will give a kind of reality to their predictions."

"Well, sir, go," said Louis XVIII., "and remember that I am waiting for you."

"I will but go and return, sire. I shall be back in ten minutes."

"And I, sire," said M. de Blacas, "will go and find my messenger."

"Wait, sir, wait," said Louis XVIII. "Really, M. de Blacas, I must change your armorial bearings; I will give you an eagle with outstretched wings, holding in its claws a prey which tries in vain to escape, and bearing this device, *Tenax*."

"Sire, I listen," said De Blacas, biting his nails with impatience.

"I wish to consult you on this passage, '*Molli fugies anhelitu;*' you know it refers to a stag flying from a wolf. Are you not a sportsman and a great wolf-hunter? Well, then, what do you think of the *molli anhelitu?*"

"Admirable, sire; but my messenger is like the stag you refer to, for he has posted two hundred and twenty leagues in little more than three days."

"Which is undergoing great fatigue and anxiety, my

dear count, when we have a telegraph which corresponds in three or four hours, and that without putting it the least in the world out of breath."

"Ah, sire, you recompense but badly this poor young man, who has come so far, and with so much ardour, to give your majesty useful information. If only for the sake of M. de Salvieux, who recommends him to me, I entreat your majesty to receive him graciously."

"M. de Salvieux, my brother's chamberlain?"

"Yes, sire."

"He is at Marseilles."

"And writes me thence."

"Does he speak to you of this conspiracy?"

"No, but strongly recommends M. de Villefort, and begs me to present him to your majesty."

"M. de Villefort!" cried the king. "Is the messenger's name M. de Villefort?"

"Yes, sire."

"And he comes from Marseilles?"

"In person."

"Why did you not mention his name at once?" replied the king, betraying some uneasiness.

"Sire, I thought his name was unknown to your majesty."

"No, no, Blacas; he is a man of strong and elevated understanding—ambitious, too, and, *pardieu!* you know his father's name!"

"His father?"

"Yes—Noirtier."

"Noirtier the Girondin? Noirtier the senator?"

"He himself."

"And your majesty has employed the son of such a man?"

"Blacas, my friend, you have but limited comprehension. I told you Villefort was ambitious, and to attain his ambition Villefort would sacrifice everything—even his father."

"Then, sire, may I present him?"

"This instant, count! Where is he?"

"Waiting below, in my carriage."

"Seek him at once."

"I hasten to do so."

The count left the royal presence with the speed of a young man; his really sincere royalism made him youthful again. Louis XVIII. remained alone, and turning his eyes on his half-opened Horace, muttered, "*Justum et tenacem propositi virum.*"

The king was seated in the same place where the count had left him. On opening the door, Villefort found himself facing him, and the young magistrate's first impulse was to pause.

"Come in, M. de Villefort," said the king; "come in."

Villefort bowed, and, advancing a few steps, waited until the king should interrogate him.

"M. de Villefort," said Louis XVIII., "the Count de Blacas assures me you have some interesting information to communicate."

"Sire, the count is right, and I believe your majesty will think it equally important."

"In the first place, and before everything else, sir, is the bad news as great in your opinion as it is wished to make me believe?"

"Sire, I believe it to be most urgent, but I hope, by the speed I have used, that it is not irreparable."

"Speak as fully as you please, sir," said the king, who began to give way to the emotion which had showed itself in Blacas's face and affected Villefort's voice. "Speak, sir, and pray begin at the beginning; I like order in everything."

"Sire," said Villefort, "I will render a faithful report to your majesty, but I must entreat your forgiveness if my anxiety creates some obscurity in my language."

A glance at the king after this discreet and subtle exordium assured Villefort of the benignity of his august auditor, and he continued,—

"Sire, I have come as rapidly to Paris as possible, to

inform your majesty that I have discovered, in the exercise of my duties, not a commonplace and insignificant plot, such as is every day got up in the lower ranks of the people and in the army, but an actual conspiracy—a storm which menaces no less than the throne of your majesty. Sire, the usurper is arming three ships. He meditates some project, which, however mad, is yet perhaps terrible. At this moment he will have left Elba, to go whither I know not, but assuredly to attempt a landing either at Naples, or on the coast of Tuscany, or perhaps on the shore of France. Your majesty is well aware that the sovereign of the Isle of Elba has maintained his relations with Italy and France?"

"I am, sir," said the king, much agitated; "and recently we have had information that the Bonapartist clubs have had meetings in the Rue Saint-Jacques. But proceed, I beg of you; how did you obtain these details?"

"Sire, they are the results of an examination which I have made of a man of Marseilles, whom I have watched for some time, and arrested on the day of my departure. This person, a sailor, of turbulent character, and whom I suspected of Bonapartism, has been secretly to the Isle of Elba. There he saw the grand-marshal, who charged him with a verbal mission to a Bonapartist in Paris, whose name I could not extract from him; but this mission was to prepare men's minds for a return (it is the man who says this, sire)—a return which will soon occur."

"And where is this man?"

"In prison, sire."

"And the matter seems serious to you?"

"So serious, sire, that when the circumstance surprised me in the midst of a family festival, on the very day of my betrothal, I left my bride and friends, postponing everything, that I might hasten to lay at your majesty's feet the fears which impressed me, and the assurance of my devotion."

"True," said Louis XVIII., "was there not a marriage engagement between you and Mademoiselle de Saint-Méran?"

"Daughter of one of your majesty's most faithful servants."

"Yes, yes; but let us talk of this plot, M. de Villefort."

"Sire, I fear it is more than a plot; I fear it is a conspiracy."

"A conspiracy in these times," said Louis XVIII., smiling, "is a thing very easy to meditate, but more difficult to conduct to an end; inasmuch as, re-established so recently on the throne of our ancestors, we have our eyes open at once upon the past, the present, and the future. For the last ten months my ministers have redoubled their vigilance, in order to watch the shore of the Mediterranean. If Bonaparte landed at Naples, the whole coalition would be on foot before he could even reach Piombino; if he land in Tuscany, he will be in an unfriendly territory; if he land in France, it must be with a handful of men, and the result of that is easily foretold, execrated as he is by the population. Take courage, sir; but at the same time rely on our royal gratitude."

"Ah, here is M. Dandré!" cried De Blacas.

At this instant the minister of police appeared at the door, pale, trembling, and as if ready to faint.

Villefort was about to retire, but M. de Blacas, taking his hand, restrained him.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OGRE OF CORSICA.

At the sight of this agitation Louis XVIII. pushed from him violently the table at which he was writing.

"What ails you, M. le Baron?" he exclaimed. "You

appear quite aghast. This trouble—this hesitation—have they anything to do with what M. de Blacas has told me, and M. de Villefort has just confirmed?"

M. de Blacas moved suddenly towards the baron, but the fright of the courtier precluded the triumph of the statesman; and besides, as matters were, it was much more to his advantage that the prefect of police should triumph over him than that he should humiliate the prefect.

"Sire——" stammered the baron.

"Well, what is it?" asked Louis XVIII.

The minister of police, giving way to an impulse of despair, was about to throw himself at the feet of Louis XVIII., who retreated a step and frowned.

"Will you speak?" he said.

"Oh, sire, what a dreadful misfortune! I am indeed to be pitied. I can never forgive myself!"

"Monsieur," said Louis XVIII., "I command you to speak."

"Well, sire, the usurper left Elba on the 26th February, and landed on the 1st of March."

"And where? In Italy?" asked the king eagerly.

"In France, sire, at a small port near Antibes, in the Gulf of Juan."

"The usurper landed in France, near Antibes, in the Gulf of Juan, two hundred and fifty leagues from Paris, on the 1st of March, and you only acquired this information to-day, the 4th of March! Well, sir, what you tell me is impossible. You must have received a false report, or you have gone mad."

"Alas! sire, it is but too true!"

Louis made a gesture of indescribable anger and alarm, and then drew himself up, as if this sudden blow had struck him at the same moment in heart and countenance.

"In France!" he cried, "the usurper in France! Then they did not watch over this man. Who knows? they were, perhaps, in league with him."

"Oh, sire!" exclaimed the Comte de Blacas, "M.

Dandré is not a man to be accused of treason! Sire, we have all been blind, and the minister of police has shared the general blindness—that is all."

"But——" said Villefort, and then suddenly checking himself, he was silent; then he continued. "Your pardon, sire," he said, bowing, "my zeal carried me away. Will your majesty deign to excuse me?"

"Speak, sir—speak boldly," replied Louis. "You alone forewarned us of the evil; now try and aid us with the remedy!"

"Sire," said Villefort, "the usurper is detested in the south; and it seems to me that if he ventured into the south, it would be easy to raise Languedoc and Provence against him."

"Yes, assuredly," replied the minister; "but he is advancing by Gap and Sisteron."

"Advancing! he is advancing!" said Louis XVIII. "Is he, then, advancing on Paris?"

The minister of police kept a silence which was equivalent to a complete avowal.

"And Dauphiné, sir?" inquired the king of Villefort. "Do you think it possible to rouse that as well as Provence?"

"Sire, I am sorry to tell your majesty a cruel fact; but the feeling in Dauphiné is far from resembling that of Provence or Languedoc. The mountaineers are Bonapartists, sire."

"Then," murmured Louis, "he was well informed. And how many men had he with him?"

"I do not know, sire," answered the minister of police.

"What! you do not know? Have you neglected to obtain information of this circumstance? It is true this is of small importance," he added, with a withering smile.

"Sire, it was impossible to learn; the despatch simply stated the fact of the landing and the route taken by the usurper."

Louis XVIII. advanced a step, and folded his arms over his chest as Napoleon would have done.

"So then!" he exclaimed, turning pale with anger, "seven conjoined and allied armies overthrew that man. A miracle of Heaven replaced me on the throne of my fathers after five-and-twenty years of exile. I have, during those five-and-twenty years, studied, sounded, analyzed the men and things of that France which was promised to me; and when I have attained the end of all my wishes, the power I hold in my hands bursts and shatters me to atoms!"

"Sire, it is fatality!" murmured the minister, feeling that such a pressure, however light for destiny, was sufficient to overwhelm a man.

"What our enemies say of us is then true. We have learnt nothing, forgotten nothing! If I were betrayed as he was, I would console myself; but to be in the midst of persons elevated by myself to dignities, who ought to watch over me more preciously than over themselves; for my fortune is theirs!—before me they were nothing—after me they will be nothing, and perish miserably from incapacity—ineptitude! Oh yes, sir! you are right—it is fatality! Oh, I would rather mount the scaffold of my brother, Louis XVI., than thus descend the staircase of the Tuileries driven away by ridicule. Ridicule, sir—why, you know not its power in France, and yet you ought to know it!"

"Sire, sire," murmured the minister, "for pity's——"

"Approach, M. de Villefort," resumed the king, addressing the young man, who, motionless and breathless was listening to a conversation on which depended the destiny of a kingdom. "Approach, and tell monsieur that it is possible to know beforehand all that he has not known."

"Sire, it was really impossible to learn secrets which that man concealed from all the world."

"Really impossible! Yes—that is a great word, sir. Unfortunately, there are great words, as there are great men. I have measured them. Really impossible for a minister who has an office, agents, spies, and fifteen

hundred thousand francs for secret service money, to know what is going on at sixty leagues from the coast of France! Well, then, see, here is a gentleman who had none of these resources at his disposal — a gentleman, only a simple magistrate, who learned more than you with all your police, and who would have saved my crown, if, like you, he had the power of directing a telegraph."

The look of the minister of police was turned with concentrated spite on Villefort, who bent his head with the modesty of triumph.

"I do not mean that for you, Blacas," continued Louis XVIII.; "for if you have discovered nothing, at least you have had the good sense to persevere in your suspicions. Any other than yourself would have considered the disclosure of M. de Villefort as insignificant, or else dictated by a venal ambition."

These words were meant to allude to those which the minister of police had uttered with so much confidence an hour before.

Villefort understood the drift of the king. Any other person would, perhaps, have been too much overcome by the intoxication of praise; but he feared to make for himself a mortal enemy of the police minister, although he perceived Dandré was irrevocably lost. In fact, the minister who, in the plenitude of his power, had been unable to penetrate Napoleon's secret, might in the convulsions of his dying throes penetrate his (Villefort's) secret, for which end he had but to interrogate Dantès. He therefore came to the rescue of the crestfallen minister, instead of aiding to crush him.

"Sire," said Villefort, "the rapidity of the event must prove to your majesty that God alone can prevent it, by raising a tempest. What your majesty is pleased to attribute to me as profound perspicacity is simply owing to chance; and I have profited by that chance, like a good and devoted servant — that's all. Do not attribute to me more than I deserve, sire, that your majesty may

never have occasion to recall the first opinion you have been pleased to form of me."

The minister of police thanked the young man by an eloquent look, and Villefort understood that he had succeeded in his design—that is to say, that without forfeiting the gratitude of the king, he had made a friend of one on whom, in case of necessity, he might rely.

"'Tis well!" resumed the king. "And now, gentlemen," he continued, turning towards M. de Blacas and the minister of police, "I have no further occasion for you, and you may retire; what now remains to do is in the department of the minister of war."

"Fortunately, sire," said M. de Blacas, "we can rely on the army. Your majesty knows how every report confirms their loyalty and attachment."

"Do not mention reports, sir, to me! for I know now what confidence to place in them. Yet, *à propos* of reports, M. le Baron, what intelligence have you as to our affair in the Rue Saint-Jacques?"

"The affair in the Rue Saint-Jacques!" exclaimed Villefort, unable to repress an exclamation. Then, suddenly pausing, he added, "Your pardon, sire, but my devotion to your majesty has made me forget, not the respect I have, for that is too deeply engraven in my heart, but the rules of etiquette."

"Say and act, sir!" replied the king; "you have acquired the right to inquire."

"Sire," replied the minister of police, "I came this moment to give your majesty fresh information which I had obtained on this head, when your majesty's attention was attracted by this terrible affair of the gulf, and now these facts will cease to interest your majesty."

"On the contrary, sir—on the contrary," said Louis XVIII., "this affair seems to me to have a decided connection with that which occupies our attention; and the death of General Quesnel will, perhaps, put us on the direct track of a great internal conspiracy."

At the name of General Quesnel, Villefort trembled.

"All combines, sir," said the minister of police, "to ensure the probability that this death is not the result of a suicide, as we at first believed, but of an assassination. General Quesnel had quitted, as it appears, a Bonapartist club when he disappeared. An unknown person had been with him that morning, and made an appointment with him in the Rue Saint-Jacques; unfortunately, the general's valet-de-chambre, who was dressing his hair at the moment when the stranger entered, heard the street mentioned, but did not catch the number."

As the police minister related this to the king, Villefort, who seemed as if his very existence hung on his lips, turned alternately red and pale. The king looked towards him.

"Do you not think with me, M. de Villefort, that General Quesnel, whom they believed attached to the usurper, but who was really entirely devoted to me, has perished the victim of a Bonapartist ambush?"

"It is probable, sire," replied Villefort. "But is this all that is known?"

"They are on the traces of the man who appointed the meeting with him."

"On his traces?" said Villefort.

"Yes; the servant has given his description. He is a man of from fifty to fifty-two years of age, brown, with black eyes, covered with shaggy eyebrows, and a thick moustache. He was dressed in a blue frock-coat, buttoned up to the chin, and wore at his button-hole the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honour. Yesterday an individual was followed exactly corresponding with this description, but he was lost sight of at the corner of the Rue de la Jussienne and the Rue Coq-Héron."

Villefort leaned on the back of an armchair; for in proportion as the minister of police spoke, he felt his legs bend under him; but when he learnt that the unknown had escaped the vigilance of the agent who followed him, he breathed again.

"Continue to seek for this man, sir," said the king to the minister of police; "for if, as all conspires to convince me, General Quesnel, who would have been so useful to us at this moment, has been murdered, his assassins, Bonapartists or not, shall be cruelly punished."

It required all Villefort's *sang-froid* not to betray the terror with which this declaration of the king inspired him.

"How strange!" continued the king, with some asperity; "the police thinks all is said when it says, 'A murder has been committed,' and particularly when it adds, 'And we are on the trace of the guilty persons.'"

"Sire, your majesty will, I trust, be amply satisfied on this point at least."

"We shall see. I will no longer detain you, baron.—M. de Villefort, you must be fatigued after so long a journey; go and repose yourself. Of course you stopped at your father's?"

A faintness came over Villefort.

"No, sire," he replied, "I alighted at the Hôtel de Madrid, in the Rue de Tournon."

"But you have seen him?"

"Sire, I went straight to M. le Comte de Blacas."

"But you will see him, then?"

"I think not, sire."

"Ah, I forgot," said Louis, smiling in a manner which proved that all these questions were not made without a motive—"I forgot you and M. Noirtier are not on the best terms possible, and that this is another sacrifice made to the royal cause, and for which you should be recompensed."

"Sire, the kindness your majesty deigns to evince towards me is a recompense which so far surpasses my utmost ambition that I have nothing more to request."

"Never mind, sir, we will not forget you; make your mind easy. In the meanwhile" (the king here detached the cross of the Legion of Honour he usually wore over his blue coat, near the cross of Saint-Louis, above the

order of Notre-Dame-du-Mont-Carmel and Saint-Lazare, and gave it to Villefort)—"in the meanwhile, take this cross."

"Sire," said Villefort, "your majesty mistakes; this cross is that of an officer."

"*Ma foi!*" said Louis XVIII., "take it, such as it is, for I have not the time to procure you another.—Blacas, let it be your care to see that the brevet is made out and sent to M. de Villefort."

Villefort's eyes were filled with tears of joy and pride; he took the cross and kissed it.

"And now," he said, "may I inquire what are the orders with which your majesty deigns to honour me?"

"Take what rest you require, and remember that, unable to serve me here in Paris, you may be of the greatest service to me at Marseilles."

"Sire," replied Villefort, bowing, "in an hour I shall have quitted Paris."

"Go, sir," said the king; "and should I forget you (kings' memories are short), do not be afraid to bring yourself to my recollection.—M. le Baron, send for the minister of war.—Blacas, remain."

"Ah, sir," said the minister of police to Villefort, as they left the Tuileries, "you enter by the right door; your fortune is made."

Ten minutes afterwards Villefort reached his hotel, ordered his horses in two hours, and desired to have his breakfast brought to him. He was about to commence his repast when the sound of the bell, rung by a free and firm hand, was heard. The valet opened the door, and Villefort heard his name pronounced.

"Who could know that I was here already?" said the young man.

The valet entered.

"Well," said Villefort, "what is it? Who rang? Who asked for me?"

"A stranger, who will not send in his name."

"A stranger who will not send in his name! What can he want with me?"

"He wishes to speak to you."

"To me?"

"Yes."

"Did he mention my name?"

"Yes."

"What sort of person is he?"

"Why, sir, a man of about fifty."

"Short or tall?"

"About your own height, sir."

"Dark or fair?"

"Dark—very dark; with black eyes, black hair, black eyebrows."

"And how dressed?" asked Villefort quickly.

"In a blue frock-coat, buttoned up close, decorated with the Legion of Honour."

"It is he!" said Villefort, turning pale.

"Eh, *pardieu!*" said the individual whose description we have twice given, entering the door, "what a great deal of ceremony! Is it the custom in Marseilles for sons to keep their fathers waiting in their ante-rooms?"

"Father!" cried Villefort; "then I was not deceived. I felt sure it must be you."

"Well, then, if you felt so sure," replied the newcomer, putting his cane in a corner and his hat on a chair, "allow me to say, my dear Gérard, that it was not very filial of you to keep me waiting at the door."

"Leave us, Germain," said Villefort.

The servant quitted the apartment with evident signs of astonishment.

CHAPTER XII.

FATHER AND SON.

M. Noirtier—for it was indeed he who entered—followed with his eyes the servant until he had closed the door,

and then, fearing no doubt that he might be overheard in the ante-chamber, he opened the door again; nor was the precaution useless, as appeared from the rapid retreat of Germain, who proved that he was not exempt from the sin which ruined our first parents.

M. Noirtier then took the trouble to close carefully the door of the ante-chamber, then that of the bed-chamber, and then extended his hand to Villefort, who had followed all his motions with surprise which he could not conceal.

"Well, now, my dear Gérard," said he to the young man, with a very significant look, "do you know you seem as if you were not very glad to see me?"

"My dear father," said Villefort, "I am, on the contrary, delighted; but I so little expected your visit, that it has somehow overcome me."

"But, my dear fellow," replied M. Noirtier, seating himself, "I might say the same thing to you, when you announce to me your wedding for the 28th of February, and on the 4th of March here you are in Paris."

"And if I have come, my dear father," said Gérard, drawing closer to M. Noirtier, "do not complain, for it is for you that I came, and my journey will save you."

"Ah, indeed!" said M. Noirtier, stretching himself out at his ease in the chair. "Really, pray tell me all about it, M. le Magistrat, for it must be interesting."

"Father, you have heard speak of a certain club of Bonapartists held in the Rue Saint-Jacques?"

"No. 53; yes, I am vice-president."

"Father, your coolness makes me shudder."

"Why, my dear boy, when a man has been proscribed by the mountaineers, has escaped from Paris in a hay-cart, been hunted in the *landes* of Bordeaux by M. Robespierre's bloodhounds, he becomes accustomed to most things. But go on, what about the club in the Rue Saint-Jacques?"

"Why, they induced General Quesnel to go there, and General Quesnel, who quitted his own house at

nine o'clock in the evening, was found the next day in the Seine."

"And who told you this fine story?"

"The king himself."

"Well, then, in return for your story," continued Noirtier, "I will tell you one."

"My dear father, I think I already know what you are about to tell me."

"Ah, you have heard of the landing of the emperor?"

"Not so loud, father, I entreat of you—for your own sake as well as mine. Yes, I heard this news, and knew it even before you could; for three days ago I posted from Marseilles to Paris with all possible speed, and half desperate because I could not send with a wish two hundred leagues ahead of me the thought which was agitating my brain."

"Three days ago! You are crazy. Why, three days ago the emperor had not landed."

"No matter; I was aware of his project."

"How did you learn it?"

"By a letter addressed to you from the Isle of Elba."

"To me?"

"To you; and which I discovered in the pocket-book of the messenger. Had that letter fallen into the hands of another, you, my dear father, would probably ere this have been shot."

Villefort's father laughed.

"Come, come," said he, "it appears that the Restoration has learned from the Empire the mode of settling affairs speedily. Shot, my dear boy! You go ahead with a vengeance. Where is this letter you talk about? I know you too well to suppose you would allow such a thing to pass you."

"I burnt it, for fear that even a fragment should remain; for that letter must have effected your condemnation."

"And the destruction of your future prospects," replied Noirtier; "yes, I can easily comprehend that.

But I have nothing to fear whilst I have you to protect me."

"I do better than that, sir—I save you."

"You do? Why, really, the thing becomes more and more dramatic. Explain yourself."

"I must refer again to the club in the Rue Saint-Jacques."

"It appears that this club is rather a bore to the police. Why didn't they search more vigilantly? They would have found——"

"They have not found; but they are on the track."

"Yes, that's the usual phrase; I know it well. When the police is at fault, it declares that it is on the track; and the government patiently awaits the day when it comes to say, with a sneaking air, that the track is lost."

"Yes; but they have found a corpse. The general has been killed, and in all countries they call that a murder."

"A murder do you call it? Why, there is nothing to prove that the general was murdered. People are found every day in the Seine, having thrown themselves in, or have been drowned from not knowing how to swim."

"Father, you know very well that the general was not a man to drown himself in despair; and people do not bathe in the Seine in the month of January. No, no, do not mistake; this death was a murder in every sense of the word."

"And who thus designated it?"

"The king himself."

"The king! I thought he was philosopher enough to allow that there was no murder in politics. In politics, my dear fellow, you know, as well as I do, there are no men, but ideas—no feelings, but interests; in politics we do not kill a man, we only remove an obstacle, that is all. Did I ever say to you, when you were fulfilling your character as a royalist, and cut off the head of one of my party, 'My son, you have committed a murder'?

No, I said, 'Very well, sir, you have gained the victory; to-morrow, perchance, it will be our turn.'"

"But, father, take care when our turn comes, our revenge will be sweeping."

"I do not understand you."

"You rely on the usurper's return?"

"We do."

"You are mistaken. He will not advance two leagues into the interior of France without being followed, tracked, and caught like a wild beast."

"My dear fellow, the emperor is at this moment on the way to Grenoble; on the 10th or 12th he will be at Lyons, and on the 20th or 25th at Paris."

"The population will rise."

"Yes, to go and meet him."

"He has but a handful of men with him, and armies will be dispatched against him."

"Yes, to escort him into the capital. Really, my dear Gérard, you are but a child; you think yourself well informed, because a post has told you three days after the landing, 'The usurper has landed at Cannes with several men. He is pursued.' But where is he? what is he doing? You do not know well; and in this way they will pursue him to Paris, without drawing a trigger."

"Grenoble and Lyons are faithful cities, and will oppose to him an impassable barrier."

"Grenoble will open her gates to him with enthusiasm—all Lyons will hasten to welcome him. Believe me, we are as well informed as you, and our police is as good as your own. Would you like a proof of it? Well, you wished to conceal your journey from me, and yet I knew of your arrival half an hour after you had passed the barrier. You gave your direction to no one but your postilion, yet I have your address, and in proof I am here the very instant you are going to sit at table. Ring, then, if you please, for a second knife, fork, and plate, and we will dine together."

"Indeed!" replied Villefort, looking at his father with astonishment, "you really do seem very well informed."

"Eh? the thing is simple enough. You who are in power have only the means that money produces—we who are in expectation have those which devotion prompts."

"Devotion!" said Villefort, with a sneer.

"Yes, devotion; for that is, I believe, the phrase for hopeful ambition."

And Villefort's father extended his hand to the bell-rope, to summon the servant whom his son had not called. Villefort arrested his arm.

"Wait, my dear father," said the young man; "one other word."

"Say it."

"However ill-conducted is the royalist police, they yet know one terrible thing."

"What is that?"

"The description of the man who, on the morning of the day when General Quesnel disappeared, presented himself at his house."

"Oh, the admirable police have found out that, have they? And what may be that description?"

"Brown complexion; hair, eyebrows, and whiskers black; blue frock-coat, buttoned up to the chin; rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honour in his button-hole; a hat with wide brim, and a cane."

"Ah, ah! that is it, is it?" said Noirtier; "and why, then, have they not laid hands on the individual?"

"Because yesterday, or the day before, they lost sight of him at the corner of the Rue Coq-Héron."

"Didn't I say your police was good for nothing?"

"Yes; but still it may lay hands on him."

"True," said Noirtier, looking carelessly around him—"true, if this individual were not warned as he is;" and he added with a smile, "he will consequently change looks and costume."

At these words he rose, and put off his frock-coat and cravat, went towards a table on which lay all the requisites of the toilette for his son, lathered his face, took a razor, and, with a firm hand, cut off the whiskers that might have compromised him, and gave the police so decided a trace. Villefort watched him with alarm, not divested of admiration.

His whiskers cut off, Noirtier gave another turn to his hair; took, instead of his black cravat, a coloured neckerchief which lay at the top of an open portmanteau; put on, in lieu of his blue and high-buttoned frock-coat, a coat of Villefort's, of dark brown, and sloped away in front; tried on before the glass a narrow-brimmed hat of his son's, which appeared to fit him perfectly; and leaving his cane in the corner where he had deposited it, he made to whistle in his powerful hand a small bamboo switch, which the dandy deputy used when he walked, and which aided in giving him that easy swagger which was one of his principal characteristics.

"Well," he said, turning towards his wondering son, when this disguise was completed—"well, do you think your police will recognize me now?"

"No, father," stammered Villefort; "at least, I hope not."

"And now, my dear boy," continued Noirtier, "I rely on your prudence to remove all the things which I leave in your care."

"Oh, rely on me," said Villefort.

"Yes, yes! and now I believe you are right, and that you have really saved my life; but be assured I will return the obligation to you hereafter."

Villefort shook his head.

"You are not convinced yet?"

"I hope, at least, that you may be mistaken."

"Shall you see the king again?"

"Perhaps."

"Would you pass in his eyes for a prophet?"

"Prophets of evil are not in favour at the court, father."

"True, but some day they do them justice; and supposing a second restoration, you would then pass for a great man."

"Well, what should I say to the king?"

"Say this to him: 'Sire, you are deceived as to the feeling in France, as to the opinions of the towns, and the prejudices of the army; he whom in Paris you call the ogre of Corsica, who at Nevers is styled the usurper, is already saluted as Bonaparte at Lyons, and emperor at Grenoble. You think he is tracked, pursued, captured; he is advancing as rapidly as his own eagles. The soldiers you believe dying with hunger, worn out with fatigue, ready to desert, increase like atoms of snow about the rolling ball which hastens onward. Sire, go, leave France to its real master, to him who did not buy, but acquired it; go, sire, not that you incur any risk, for your adversary is powerful enough to show you mercy, but because it would be humiliating for a grandson of Saint-Louis to owe his life to the man of Arcola, Marengo, Austerlitz.' Tell him this, Gérard; or, rather, tell him nothing. Keep your journey a secret; do not boast of what you have come to Paris to do or have done; return with all speed, enter Marseilles at night, and your house by the back-door, and there remain, quiet, submissive, secret, and, above all, inoffensive; for this time, I swear to you, we shall act like powerful men who know their enemies. Go, my son—go, my dear Gérard, and by your obedience to my paternal orders, or, if you prefer it, friendly counsels, we will keep you in your place. This will be," added Noirtier, with a smile, "one means by which you may a second time save me, if the political balance should one day place you high and me low. Adieu, my dear Gerard, and at your next journey alight at my door."

Noirtier left the room when he had finished, with the same calmness that had characterized him during the whole of this remarkable and trying conversation.

Villefort, pale and agitated, ran to the window, put

aside the curtain, and saw him pass, cool and collected, by two or three ill-looking men at the corner of the street, who were there, perhaps, to arrest a man with black whiskers, and a blue frock-coat, and hat with broad brim.

Villefort stood watching, breathless, until his father had disappeared at the Rue Bussy. Then he turned to the various articles he had left behind him; put at the bottom of his portmanteau his black cravat and blue frock-coat; threw the hat into a dark closet; broke the cane into small bits, and flung it in the fire; put on his travelling cap, and calling his valet, checked with a look the thousand questions he was ready to ask, paid his bill, sprung into his carriage, which was ready; learned at Lyons that Bonaparte had entered Grenoble; and in the midst of the tumult which prevailed along the road, at length reached Marseilles, a prey to all the hopes and fears which enter into the heart of man with ambition and its first successes.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HUNDRED DAYS.

M. NOIRTIER was a true prophet, and things progressed rapidly, as he had predicted. Every one knows the history of the famous return from Elba, a return which, without example in the past, will probably remain without imitation in the future.

Napoleon would, doubtless, have deprived Villefort of his office had it not been for Noirtier, who was all-powerful at the court; and thus the Girondin of '93 and the Senator of 1806 protected him who so lately had been his protector.

The king's procureur alone was deprived of his office, being suspected of royalism.

However, scarcely was the imperial power established that is, scarcely had the emperor re-entered the Tuileries and issued his numerous orders from that little cabinet into which we have introduced our readers, and on the table of which he found Louis XVIII.'s snuff-box, half full, than Marseilles began to rekindle the flames of civil war, and it required but little to excite the populace to acts of far greater violence than the shouts and insults with which they assailed the royalists whenever they ventured abroad.

Owing to this change, the worthy shipowner became at that moment—we will not say all-powerful, because Morrel was a prudent and rather a timid man, so much so, that many of the most zealous partisans of Bonaparte accused him of "*moderation*"—but sufficiently influential to make a demand in favour of Dantès.

Villefort retained his place, but his marriage was put off until a more favourable opportunity. If the emperor remained on the throne, Gérard required a different alliance to aid his career; if Louis XVIII. returned, the influence of M. Saint-Méran and himself became double, and the marriage must be still more suitable.

The deputy-procureur was, therefore, the first magistrate of Marseilles, when one morning his door opened, and M. Morrel was announced.

Any one else would have hastened to receive him; but Villefort was a man of ability, and he knew this would be a sign of weakness. He made Morrel wait in the ante-chamber, although he had no one with him, for the simple reason that the king's procureur always makes every one wait; and after a quarter of an hour passed in reading the papers, he ordered M. Morrel to be admitted.

Morrel expected Villefort would be dejected; he found him, as he had found him six weeks before, calm, firm, and full of that glacial politeness, that most insurmountable barrier which separates the well-bred and the vulgar man.

He had penetrated into Villefort's cabinet, convinced the magistrate would tremble at the sight of him; on the contrary, he felt a cold shudder all over him when he beheld Villefort seated, his elbow on his desk, and his head leaning on his hand. He stopped at the door; Villefort gazed at him, as if he had some difficulty in recognizing him; then, after a brief interval, during which the honest shipowner turned his hat in his hands,—

"M. Morrel, I believe?" said Villefort.

"Yes, sir."

"Come nearer," said the magistrate, with a patronizing wave of the hand, "and tell me to what circumstance I owe the honour of this visit."

"Do you not guess, monsieur?" asked Morrel.

"Not in the least; but if I can serve you in any way I shall be delighted."

"Everything depends on you."

"Explain yourself, pray."

"Monsieur," said Morrel, recovering his assurance as he proceeded, "do you recollect that a few days before the landing of his majesty the emperor, I came to intercede for a young man, the mate of my ship, who was accused of being concerned in a correspondence with the Isle of Elba; and what was the other day a crime is to-day a title to favour. You then served Louis XVIII., and you did not show any favour—it was your duty; to-day you serve Napoleon, and you ought to protect him—it is equally your duty. I come, therefore, to ask what has become of him?"

Villefort made a violent effort. "What is his name?" said he; "tell me his name."

"Edmond Dantès."

Villefort would rather have stood opposite the muzzle of a pistol, at five-and-twenty paces, than have heard this name pronounced; but he betrayed no emotion.

"Dantès!" repeated he; "Edmond Dantès?"

"Yes, monsieur."

Villefort opened a large register, then went to a table

from the table turned to his registers, and then turning to Morrel,—

"Are you quite sure you are not mistaken, monsieur?" he said, in the most natural tone in the world.

Had Morrel been a more quick-sighted man, or better versed in these matters, he would have been surprised at the king's procureur answering him on such a subject, instead of referring him to the governors of the prison or the prefect of the department. But Morrel, disappointed in his expectations of exciting fear, saw only in its place condescension. Villefort had calculated rightly.

"No," said Morrel, "I am not mistaken. I have known him ten years, and the last four he has been in my service. Do not you recollect, I came about six weeks ago to beseech your clemency, as I come to-day to beseech your justice—you received me very coldly? Oh, the royalists were very severe with the Bonapartists in those days."

"Monsieur," returned Villefort, "I was then a royalist, because I believed the Bourbons not only the heirs to the throne but the chosen of the nation. The miraculous return of Napoleon has conquered me; the legitimate monarch is he who is loved by his people."

"That's right!" cried Morrel. "I like to hear you speak thus, and I augur well for Edmond from it."

"Wait a moment," said Villefort, turning over the leaves of a register. "I have it—a sailor, who was about to marry a young Catalan girl. I recollect now it was a very serious charge."

"How so?"

"You know that when he left here he was taken to the Palais de Justice."

"Well?"

"I made my report to the authorities at Paris, and a week after he was carried off."

"Carried off!" said Morrel. "What can they have done with him?"

"Oh, he has been taken to Fenestrelles, to Pignerol, or to the Iles Sainte-Marguerite. Some fine morning he will return to assume the command of your vessel."

"Come when he will, it shall be kept for him. But how is it he is not already returned? It seems to me the first care of government should be to set at liberty those who have suffered for their adherence to it."

"Do not be too hasty, M. Morrel," replied Villefort. "The order of imprisonment came from high authority, and the order for his liberation must proceed from the same source; and, as Napoleon has scarcely been reinstated a fortnight, the letters have not yet been forwarded."

"But," said Morrel, "is there no way of expediting all these formalities of releasing him from his arrest?"

"There has been no arrest."

"How?"

"It is sometimes essential to government to cause a man's disappearance without leaving any traces, so that no written forms or documents may defeat their wishes."

"It might be so under the Bourbons; but at present——"

"It is always the same, my dear Morrel, since the reign of Louis XIV. The emperor is more strict in prison discipline than even Louis himself, and the number of prisoners whose names are not on the register is incalculable."

Had Morrel even any suspicions, so much kindness would have dispelled them.

"Well, M. de Villefort, how would you advise me to act?" asked he.

"Petition the minister."

"Oh, I know what that is; the minister receives two hundred every day, and does not read three."

"That is true; but he will read a petition countersigned and presented by me."

"And will you undertake to deliver it?"

"With the greatest pleasure. Dantès was then guilty, and now he is innocent; and it is as much my duty to free him as it was to condemn him."

"But how shall I address the minister?"

"Sit down there," said Villefort, giving up his place to Morrel, "and write what I dictate."

"Will you be so good?"

"Certainly. But lose no time; we have lost too much already."

"That is true. Only think that perhaps this poor young man is pining in captivity."

Villefort shuddered at this picture; but he was too far gone to recede: Dantès must be crushed beneath the weight of Villefort's ambition.

Villefort dictated a petition, in which, from an excellent intention no doubt, Dantès's services were exaggerated, and he was made out one of the most active agents of Napoleon's return. It was evident that at the sight of this document the minister would instantly release him.

The petition finished, Villefort read it aloud.

"That will do," said he; "leave the rest to me."

"Will the petition go soon?"

"To-day."

"Countersigned by you?"

"The best thing I can do will be to certify the truth of the contents of your petition."

And, sitting down, Villefort wrote the certificate at the bottom.

"What more is to be done?"

"I will answer for everything."

This assurance charmed Morrel, who took leave of Villefort, and hastened to announce to old Dantès that he would soon see his son.

As for Villefort, instead of sending to Paris, he carefully preserved the petition that so fearfully compromised Dantès, in the hopes of an event that seemed not unlikely—that is, a second restoration.

Dantès remained a prisoner, and heard not the noise of the fall of Louis XVIII.'s throne.

Twice during the Hundred Days had Morrel renewed his demand, and twice had Villefort soothed him with promises. At last there was Waterloo, and Morrel came no more. He had done all that was in his power, and any fresh attempt would only compromise himself uselessly.

Louis XVIII. remounted the throne, Villefort demanded and obtained the situation of king's procureur at Toulouse, and a fortnight afterwards married Renée.

Danglars comprehended the full extent of the wretched fate that overwhelmed D ntès, and, like all men of small abilities, he termed this *a decree of Providence.* But when Napoleon returned to Paris, Danglars's heart failed him, and he feared at every instant to behold Dantès eager for vengeance. He therefore informed M. Morrel of his wish to quit the sea, and obtained a recommendation from him to a Spanish merchant, into whose service he entered at the end of March—that is, ten or twelve days after Napoleon's return. He then left for Madrid, and was no more heard of.

Fernand understood nothing except that Dantès was absent. What had become of him? He cared not to inquire. Only, during the respite the absence of his rival afforded him, he reflected partly on the means of deceiving Mercédès as to the cause of his absence, partly on plans of emigration and abduction, as from time to time he sat sad and motionless on the summit of Cape Pharo, at the spot from whence Marseilles and the village des Catalans are visible, watching for the apparition of a young and handsome man, who was for him also the messenger of vengeance. Fernand's mind was made up: he would shoot Dantès, and then kill himself. But Fernand was mistaken; a man of his disposition never kills himself, for he constantly hopes.

During this time the empire made a last appeal, and

every man in France capable of bearing arms rushed to obey the summons of their emperor.

Fernand departed with the rest, bearing with him the terrible thought that perhaps his rival was behind him, and would marry Mercédès.

Had Fernand really meant to kill himself, he would have done so when he parted from Mercédès. His devotion, and the compassion he showed for her misfortunes, produced the effect they always produce on noble minds: Mercédès had always had a sincere regard for Fernand, and this was now strengthened by gratitude.

"My brother," said she, as she placed his knapsack on his shoulders, "be careful of yourself, for if you are killed I shall be alone in the world."

These words infused a ray of hope into Fernand's heart. Should Dantès not return, Mercédès might one day be his. Mercédès was left alone to gaze on this vast plain that had never seemed so barren, and the sea that had never seemed so vast.

Sometimes she stood mute and motionless as a statue, gazing towards Marseilles; at other times gazing on the sea, and debating as to whether it were not better to cast herself into the abyss of the ocean, and thus end her woes.

It was not want of courage that prevented her putting this resolution into execution; but her religious feelings came to her aid and saved her.

Caderousse was, like Fernand, enrolled in the army; but being married, and eight years older, he was merely sent to the frontier.

Old Dantès, who was only sustained by hope, lost all hope at Napoleon's downfall. Five months after he had been separated from his son, and almost at the very hour at which he was arrested, he breathed his last in Mercédès's arms.

M. Morrel paid the expenses of his funeral and a few small debts the poor old man had contracted.

There was more than benevolence in this action;

there was courage: for to assist, even on his deathbed, the father of so dangerous a Bonapartist as Dantès was stigmatized as a crime.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TWO PRISONERS.

A YEAR after Louis XVIII.'s restoration, a visit was made by the inspector-general of prisons.

Dantès heard from the recesses of his cell the noises made by the preparations for receiving him—sounds that at the depth where he lay would have been inaudible to any but the ear of a prisoner, who could distinguish the plash of the drop of water that every hour fell from the roof of his dungeon. He guessed something uncommon was passing among the living; but he had so long ceased to have any intercourse with the world that he looked upon himself as dead.

The inspector visited the cells and dungeons, one after another, of several of the prisoners, whose good behaviour or stupidity recommended them to the clemency of the government. The inspector inquired how they were fed, and if they had anything to demand. The universal response was, that the fare was detestable, and that they required their freedom.

The inspector asked if they had anything else to demand. They shook their heads! What could they desire beyond their liberty?

The inspector turned smilingly to the governor.

"I do not know what reason government can assign for these useless visits. When you see one prisoner you see all: always the same thing—ill-fed, and innocent. Are there any others?"

"Yes; the dangerous and mad prisoners are in the dungeons."

"Let us visit them," said the inspector, with an air of fatigue. "I must fulfil my mission. Let us descend."

"Let us first send for two soldiers," said the governor. "The prisoners sometimes, through mere uneasiness of life, and in order to be sentenced to death, commit acts of useless violence, and you might fall a victim."

"Take all needful precautions," replied the inspector.

Two soldiers were accordingly sent for, and the inspector descended a stair so foul, so humid, so dark, that the very sight affected the eye, the smell, and the respiration.

"Oh," cried the inspector, "who can live here?"

"A most dangerous conspirator, a man we are ordered to keep the most strict watch over, as he is daring and resolute."

"He is alone?"

"Certainly."

"How long has he been there?"

"Nearly a year."

"Was he placed here when he first arrived?"

"No; not until he attempted to kill the turnkey."

"To kill the turnkey?"

"Yes, the very one who is lighting us. Is it not true, Antoine?" asked the governor.

"True enough; he wanted to kill me!" replied the turnkey.

"He must be mad," said the inspector.

"He is worse than that—he is a devil!" returned the turnkey.

"Shall I complain of him?" demanded the inspector.

"Oh, no; it is useless. Besides, he is almost mad now, and in another year he will be quite so."

"So much the better for him—he will suffer less," said the inspector.

He was, as this remark shows, a man full of philanthropy, and in every way fit for his office.

"You are right, sir," replied the governor; "and this

remark proves that you have deeply considered the subject. Now we have in a dungeon about twenty feet distant, and to which you descend by another stair, an abbé, ancient leader of a party in Italy, who has been here since 1811, and in 1813 he went mad, and the change is astonishing. He used to weep, he now laughs; he grew thin, he now grows fat. You had better see him, for his madness is amusing."

"I will see them both," returned the inspector; "I must conscientiously perform my duty."

This was the inspector's first visit: he wished to display his authority.

"Let us visit this one first," added he.

"Willingly," replied the governor; and he signed to the turnkey to open the door. At the sound of the key turning in the lock, and the creaking of the hinges Dantès, who was crouched in a corner of the dungeon raised his head.

At the sight of a stranger, lighted by two turnkeys accompanied by two soldiers, and to whom the governor spoke bareheaded, Dantès, who guessed the truth, and that the moment to address himself to the superior authorities was come, sprang forward with clasped hands.

The soldiers presented their bayonets, for they thought he was about to attack the inspector, and the latter recoiled two or three steps. Dantès saw he was represented as a dangerous prisoner. Then, infusing all the humility he possessed into his eyes and voice, he addressed the inspector, and sought to inspire him with pity.

The inspector listened attentively; then turning to the governor, observed, "He will become religious—he is already more gentle; he is afraid, and retreated before the bayonets—madmen are not afraid of anything. I made some curious observations on this at Charenton." Then, turning to the prisoner, "What do you demand?" said he.

"What crime I have committed—to be tried; and if I am guilty, may be shot; if innocent, I may be set at liberty."

"Are you well fed?" said the inspector.

"I believe so—I know not: but that matters little; what matters really, not only to me, but to every one, is that an innocent man should languish in prison, the victim of an infamous denunciation."

"You are very humble to-day," remarked the governor; "you are not so always—the other day, for instance, when you tried to kill the turnkey."

"It is true, sir, and I beg his pardon, for he has always been very good to me; but I was mad."

"And you are not so any longer?"

"No! captivity has subdued me—I have been here so long."

"So long? When were you arrested, then?" asked the inspector.

"The 28th of February 1815, at half-past two in the afternoon."

"To-day is the 30th of June 1816; why, it is but seventeen months."

"Only seventeen months!" replied Dantès. "Oh, you do not know what is seventeen months in prison—seventeen ages rather, especially to a man who, like me, had arrived at the summit of his ambition—to a man who, like me, was on the point of marrying a woman he adored, who saw an honourable career open before him, and who loses all in an instant—who sees his prospects destroyed, and is ignorant of the fate of his affianced wife, and whether his aged father be still living! Seventeen months' captivity to a sailor accustomed to the boundless ocean is a worse punishment than human crime ever merited. Have pity on me, then, and ask for me, not indulgence, but a trial; let me know my crime and my sentence, for incertitude is worse than all."

"We shall see," said the inspector; then, turning to

the governor, "On my word, the poor devil touches me; you must show me the proofs against him."

"Certainly; but you will find terrible notes against him."

"Monsieur," continued Dantès, "I know it is not in your power to release me; but you can plead for me—you can have me tried—and that is all I ask."

"Light me," said the inspector.

"Monsieur," cried Dantès, "I can tell by your voice you are touched with pity; tell me at least to hope."

"I cannot tell you that," replied the inspector; "I can only promise to examine into your case."

"Oh, I am free!—then I am saved!"

"Who arrested you?"

"M. Villefort. See him, and hear what he says."

"M. Villefort is no longer at Marseilles; he is now at Toulouse."

"I am no longer surprised at my detention," murmured Dantès, "since my only protector is removed."

"Had M. de Villefort any cause of personal dislike to you?"

"None; on the contrary, he was very kind to me."

"I can, then, rely on the notes he has left concerning you?"

"Entirely."

"That is well. Wait patiently, then."

Dantès fell on his knees, and prayed earnestly. The door closed; but this time a fresh inmate was left with Dantès—Hope.

"Will you see the register at once," asked the governor, "or proceed to the other cell?"

"Let us visit them all," said the inspector. "If I once mounted the stairs, I should never have the courage to descend."

"Ah, this one is not like the other; and his madness is less affecting than the reason of his neighbour."

"What is his folly?"

"He fancies he possesses an immense treasure. The first year he offered government a million of francs (£40,000) for his release; the second, two; the third, three; and so on progressively. He is now in his fifth year of captivity; he will ask to speak to you in private, and offer you five millions."

"How curious! What is his name?"

"L'Abbé Faria."

"No. 27," said the inspector.

"It is here.—Unlock the door, Antoine."

The turnkey obeyed, and the inspector gazed curiously into the chamber of the *mad abbé*.

In the centre of the cell, in a circle traced with a fragment of plaster detached from the wall, sat a man whose tattered garments scarcely covered him. He was drawing in this circle geometrical lines, and seemed as much absorbed in his problem as Archimedes when the soldier of Marcellus slew him.

He did not move at the sound of the door, and continued his problem until the flash of the torches lighted up with an unwonted glare the sombre walls of his cell; then, raising his head, he perceived with astonishment the number of persons in his cell.

He hastily seized the coverlid of his bed and wrapped it round him.

"What do you demand?" said the inspector.

"I, monsieur!" replied the abbé, with an air of surprise; "I demand nothing."

"You do not understand," continued the inspector; "I am sent here by government to visit the prisoners, and hear the requests of the prisoners."

"Oh, that is different" cried the abbé; "and we shall understand each other, I hope."

"There now," whispered the governor, "it is just as I told you."

"Monsieur," continued the prisoner, "I am the Abbé Faria, born at Rome. I was for twenty years Cardinal Spada's secretary. I was arrested, why I know not, in

1811; since then I have demanded my liberty from the Italian and French government."

"Why from the French government?"

"Because I was arrested at Piombino; and I presume that, like Milan and Florence, Piombino has become the capital of some French department."

"Ah!" said the inspector, "you have not the latest intelligence from Italy."

"They date from the day on which I was arrested," returned the Abbé Faria; "and as the emperor had created the kingdom of Rome for his infant son, I presume that he has realized the dream of Machiavel and Cæsar Borgia, which was to make Italy one vast kingdom."

"Monsieur," returned the inspector, "Providence has changed this gigantic plan you advocate so warmly."

"It is the only means of rendering Italy happy and independent."

"Very possibly; only I am not come to discuss politics but to inquire if you have anything to ask or to complain of."

"The food is the same as in other prisons—that is, very bad; the lodging is very unwholesome, but, on the whole, passable for a dungeon. But it is not that which I speak of, but a secret I have to reveal of the greatest importance."

"We are coming to the point," whispered the governor.

"It is for that reason I am delighted to see you," continued the abbé, "although you have disturbed me in a most important calculation, which, if it succeeded, would possibly change Newton's system. Could you allow me a few words in private?"

"What did I tell you?" said the governor.

"You knew him," returned the inspector.

"What you ask is impossible, monsieur," continued he, addressing Faria.

"But," said the abbé, "I would speak to you of a large sum, amounting to five millions."

"The very sum you named," whispered, in his turn, the inspector.

"However," continued Faria, perceiving the inspector was about to depart, "it is not absolutely necessary we should be alone; monsieur the governor can be present."

"Unfortunately," said the governor, "I know beforehand what you are about to say; it concerns your treasures, does it not?"

Faria fixed his eyes on him with an expression that would have convinced any one else of his sanity.

"Doubtless," said he; "of what else should I speak?"

"Monsieur l'Inspecteur," continued the governor, "I can tell you the story as well, for it has been dinned in my ears for the last four or five years."

"That proves," returned the abbé, "that you are like the idols of Holy Writ, who have ears and hear not."

"The government does not want your treasures," replied the inspector; "keep them until you are liberated."

The abbé's eyes glistened; he seized the inspector's hand.

"But what if I am not liberated," cried he, "and am detained here until my death? Had not government better profit by it? I will offer six millions, and I will content myself with the rest."

"On my word," said the inspector, in a low tone, "had I not been told beforehand this man was mad, I should believe what he says."

"I am not mad!" replied Faria, with that acuteness of hearing peculiar to prisoners. "The treasure I speak of really exists; and I offer to sign a treaty with you, in which I promise to lead you to the spot you shall dig; and if I deceive you, bring me here again—I ask no more."

The governor laughed. "Is the spot far from here?"

"A hundred leagues."

"It is not a bad idea," said the governor.

"If every prisoner took it into his head to travel a hundred leagues, and their guardians consented to

accompany them, they would have a capital chance of escaping."

"The scheme is well known," said the governor; "and M. l'Abbé has not even the merit of its invention."

Then turning to Faria,—

"I inquired if you are well fed?" said he.

"Swear to me," replied Faria, "to free me if what I tell you prove true, and I will stay here whilst you go to the spot."

"Are you well fed?" repeated the inspector.

"Monsieur, you run no risk, for, as I told you, I will stay here; so there is no chance of my escaping."

"You do not reply to my question," replied the inspector impatiently.

"Nor you to mine," cried the abbé. "You will not accept my gold; I will keep it for myself. You refuse me my liberty; God will give it me."

And the abbé, casting away his coverlid, resumed his place, and continued his calculations.

"What is he doing there?" said the inspector.

"Counting his treasures," replied the governor.

Faria replied to this sarcasm by a glance of profound contempt.

"He has been wealthy once, perhaps?" said the inspector.

"Or dreamed he was, and awoke mad."

"After all," said the inspector, "if he had been rich he would not have been here."

Thus finished the adventure of the Abbé Faria. He remained in his cell, and this visit only increased the belief of his insanity.

The inspector kept his word with Dantès: he examined the register, and found the following note concerning him:—

EDMOND DANTÈS. { Violent Bonapartist; took an active part in the return from Elba. The greatest watchfulness and care to be exercised.

This note was in a different hand from the rest, which proved it had been added since his confinement.

The inspector could not contend against this accusation; he simply wrote, "Nothing to be done."

This visit had infused new vigour into Dantès. He had till then forgotten the date; but now, with a fragment of plaster, he wrote the date, 30th July 1816, and made a mark every day, in order not to lose his reckoning again. Days and weeks passed away, then months; Dantès still waited. He at first expected to be freed in a fortnight. This fortnight expired. He reflected the inspector would do nothing until his return to Paris, and that he would not reach there until his circuit was finished. He therefore fixed three months. Three months passed away, then six more. During these ten months no favourable change had taken place, and Dantès began to fancy the inspector's visit was but a dream, an illusion of the brain.

At the expiration of a year the governor was changed; he had obtained the government of Ham. He took with him several of his subordinates, and amonst them Dantès's jailer. A fresh governor arrived. It would have been too tedious to acquire the names of the prisoners; he learned their numbers instead.

This horrible place consisted of fifty chambers: their inhabitants were designated by the number of their chamber; and the unhappy young man was no longer called Edmond Dantès—he was now number 34.

CHAPTER XV.

NUMBER 34 AND NUMBER 27.

DANTÈS passed through all the degrees of misfortune that prisoners, forgotten in their dungeon, suffer. He commenced with pride, a natural consequence of hope

and a consciousness of innocence; then he began to doubt his own innocence, which justified in some measure the governor's belief in his mental alienation; and then, falling into the opposite extreme, he supplicated, not Heaven, but his jailer.

He besought the jailer one day to let him have a companion, were it even the mad abbé.

The jailer, though rude and hardened by the constant sight of so much suffering, was yet a man. At the bottom of his heart he had often compassionated the unhappy young man who suffered thus; and he laid the request of number 34 before the governor: but the latter sapiently imagined that Dantès wished to conspire or attempt an escape, and refused his request.

By dint of constantly dwelling on the idea that repose was death, he began to reflect on suicide.

No sooner had this idea taken possession of him than he became more composed, arranged his couch to the best of his power, ate little, and slept less, and found this existence almost supportable, because he felt he could throw it off at pleasure, like a worn-out garment. He had two means of dying: the one was to hang himself with his handkerchief to the stanchions of the window; the other, to refuse food and starve himself. But the former means were repugnant to him. Dantès had always entertained the greatest horror of pirates, who are hung up to the yard-arm; he would not die by what seemed an infamous death. He resolved to adopt the second, and began that day to execute his resolve. Nearly four years had passed away; at the end of the second he had ceased to mark the lapse of time.

Dantès said, "I wish to die," and had chosen the manner of his death; and, fearful of changing his mind, he had taken an oath to die. "When my morning and evening meals are brought," thought he, "I will cast them out of the window, and I shall be believed to have eaten them."

He kept his word. Twice a day he cast out, by the

barred aperture, the provisions his jailer brought him—at first gaily, then with deliberation, and at last with regret. Nothing but the recollection of his oath gave him strength to proceed. Hunger rendered these viands, once so repugnant, acceptable to him; he held the plate in his hand for an hour at a time, and gazed on the morsel of bad meat, of tainted fish, of black and mouldy bread. It was the last struggle of life, which occasionally vanquished his resolve; then his dungeon seemed less sombre, his prospects less desperate. He was still young—he was only four or five-and-twenty—he had nearly fifty years to live. What unforeseen events might not open his prison door and restore him to liberty? Then he raised to his lips the repast that, like a voluntary Tantalus, he refused himself; but he thought of his oath, and he would not break it. He persisted until, at last, he had not sufficient force to cast his supper out of the loophole.

The next morning he could not see or hear. The jailer feared he was dangerously ill. Edmond hoped he was dying.

The day passed away thus: Edmond felt a species of stupor creeping over him; the gnawing pain at his stomach had ceased; his thirst had abated; when he closed his eyes he saw myriads of lights dancing before them, like the meteors that play about the marshes. It was the twilight of that mysterious country called Death!

Suddenly, about nine o'clock in the evening, Edmond heard a hollow sound in the wall against which he was lying.

So many loathsome animals inhabited the prison, that their noise did not, in general, awake him; but whether abstinence had quickened his faculties, or whether the noise was really louder than usual, Edmond raised his head and listened.

It was a continual scratching, as if made by a huge claw, a powerful tooth, or some iron instrument attacking the stones.

Although weakened, the young man's brain instantly recurred to the idea that haunts all prisoners—liberty! It seemed to him that Heaven had at length taken pity on him, and had sent this noise to warn him on the very brink of the abyss. Perhaps one of those beloved ones he had so often thought of was thinking of him, and striving to diminish the distance that separated them.

No, no! doubtless he was deceived, and it was but one of those dreams that forerun death!

Edmond still heard the sound. It lasted nearly three hours; he then heard a noise of something falling, and all was silent.

Some hours afterwards it began nearer and more distinct. Edmond became already interested in that labour, when the jailer entered.

For a week that he had resolved to die, and for four days that he put this resolution into execution, Edmond had not spoken to this man, had not answered him when he inquired what was the matter with him, and turned his face to the wall when he looked too curiously at him; but now the jailer might hear this noise and put an end to it, thus destroying a ray of something like hope that soothed his last moments.

The jailer brought him his breakfast. Dantès raised himself up, and began to speak on everything—on the bad quality of his food, on the coldness of his dungeon, grumbling and complaining, in order to have an excuse for speaking louder, and wearying the patience of his jailer, who had solicited some broth and white bread for his prisoner, and who had brought it.

Fortunately he fancied Dantès was delirious; and placing his food on the rickety table, he withdrew.

Edmond listened, and the sound became more and more distinct.

There can be no doubt, thought he, it is some prisoner who is striving to obtain his freedom.

Suddenly another idea took possession of his mind, so used to misfortune that it could scarcely understand

hope; yet this idea possessed him, that the noise arose from the workmen the governor had ordered to repair the neighbouring dungeon.

It was easy to ascertain this; but how could he risk the question? It was easy to call his jailer's attention to the noise, and watch his countenance as he listened; but might he not by this means betray interests far more precious than this short-lived satisfaction? Unfortunately, Edmond's brain was still so feeble that he could not bend his thoughts to anything in particular.

He saw but one means of restoring lucidity and clearness to his judgment. He turned his eyes towards the soup his jailer had brought him, rose, staggered towards it, raised the vessel to his lips, and drank off the contents with a feeling of indescribable pleasure. He had often heard that shipwrecked persons had died through having eagerly devoured too much food: Edmond replaced on the table the bread he was about to devour, and returned to his couch—he did not wish to die. He soon felt that his ideas became again collected; he could think, and strengthen his thoughts by reasoning. Then he said to himself: "I must put this to the test, but without compromising anybody. If it is a workman, I need but knock against the wall, and he will cease to work, in order to find out who is knocking, and why he does so; but as his occupation is sanctioned by the governor, he will soon resume it. If, on the contrary, it is a prisoner, the noise I make will alarm him, he will cease, and not recommence until he thinks every one is asleep."

Edmond rose again; but this time his legs did not tremble, and his eyes were free from mists. He advanced to a corner of his dungeon, detached a stone, and with it knocked against the wall where the sound came. He struck thrice.

At the first blow the sound ceased, as if by magic.

Edmond listened intently; an hour passed, two hours passed, and no sound was heard from the wall—all was silent there.

Full of hope, Edmond swallowed a few mouthfuls of bread and water, and, thanks to the excellence of his constitution, found himself well-nigh recovered.

The day passed away in utter silence; night came without the noise having recommenced.

"It is a prisoner," said Edmond joyfully.

The night passed in perfect silence. Edmond did not close his eyes.

In the morning the jailer brought him fresh provisions—he had already devoured those of the previous day; he ate these, listening anxiously for the sound, walking round and round his cell, shaking the iron bars of the loophole, restoring by exercise vigour and agility to his limbs, and preparing himself thus for his future destiny. At intervals he listened if the noise had not begun again, and grew impatient at the prudence of the prisoner, who did not guess he had been disturbed by a captive as anxious for liberty as himself.

Three days passed—seventy-two long, tedious hours!

At length, one evening, as the jailer was visiting him for the last time that night, Dantès fancied he heard an almost imperceptible movement among the stones.

Edmond recoiled from the wall, walked up and down his cell to collect his thoughts, and replaced his ear against the wall.

There could be no doubt something was passing on the other side; the prisoner had discovered the danger, and had substituted the lever for the chisel.

Encouraged by this discovery, Edmond determined to assist the indefatigable labourer. He began by moving his bed, and sought with his eyes for anything with which he could pierce the wall, penetrate the cement, and displace a stone.

He saw nothing: he had no knife or sharp instrument; the grating of his window alone was of iron, and he had too often assured himself of its solidity. All his furniture consisted of a bed, a chair, a table, a pail, and a jug. The bed had iron clamps, but they were screwed

to the wood, and it would have required a screw-driver to take them off. The table and chair had nothing; the pail had had a handle, but that had been removed.

Dantès had but one resource, which was to break the jug, and with one of the sharp fragments attack the wall. He let the jug fall on the floor, and it broke in pieces.

Dantès concealed two or three of the sharpest fragments in his bed, leaving the rest on the floor. The breaking of his jug was too natural an accident to excite suspicion. Edmond had all the night to work in, but in the darkness he could not do much, and he soon felt his instrument was blunted against something hard; he pushed back his bed, and awaited the day.

All night he heard the subterranean workman, who continued to mine his way. The day came, the jailer entered. Dantès told him the jug had fallen from his hands in drinking, and the jailer went grumblingly to fetch another, without giving himself the trouble to remove the fragments of the broken one.

He returned speedily, recommended the prisoner to be more careful, and departed.

Dantès heard joyfully the key grate in the lock, he listened until the sound of steps died away, and then, hastily displacing his bed, saw by the faint light that penetrated into his cell, that he had laboured uselessly the previous evening in attacking the stone instead of removing the plaster that surrounded it.

The damp had rendered it friable, and Dantès saw joyfully the plaster detach itself—in small morsels, it is true—but at the end of half an hour he had scraped off a handful. A mathematician might have calculated that in two years, supposing that the rock was not encountered, a passage, twenty feet long and two feet broad, might be formed.

The prisoner reproached himself with not having thus employed the hours he had passed in prayers and despair.

In six years (the space he had been confined) what might he not have accomplished?

In three days he had succeeded, with the utmost precaution, in removing the cement and exposing the stone. The wall was formed of rough stones, to give solidity to which were embedded, at intervals, blocks of hewn stone. It was one of these he had uncovered and which he must remove from its socket.

Dantès strove to do so with his nails, but they were too weak. The fragments of the jug broke, and, after an hour of useless toil, Dantès paused.

Was he to be thus stopped at the beginning, and was he to wait inactive until his fellow-workman had completed his toils?

Suddenly an idea occurred to him. He smiled, and the perspiration dried on his forehead.

The jailer always brought Dantès's soup in an iron saucepan: this saucepan contained the soup of a second prisoner; for Dantès had remarked that it was either quite full, or half empty, according as the turnkey gave it to himself or his companion first.

The handle of this saucepan was of iron; Dantès would have given ten years of his life in exchange for it.

The jailer poured the contents of this saucepan into Dantès's plate, who, after eating his soup with a wooden spoon, washed the plate, which thus served for every day. In the evening Dantès placed his plate on the ground near the door; the jailer, as he entered, stepped on it and broke it.

This time he could not blame Dantès. He was wrong to leave it there, but the jailer was wrong not to have looked before him.

The jailer therefore contented himself with grumbling. Then he looked about him for something to pour the soup into. Dantès's whole furniture consisted of one plate; there was no alternative.

"Leave the saucepan," said Dantès; "you can take it away when you bring me my breakfast."

This advice was to the jailer's taste, as it spared him the necessity of ascending, descending, and ascending again.

He left the saucepan.

Dantès was beside himself with joy. He rapidly devoured his food, and after waiting an hour lest the jailer should change his mind and return, he removed his bed, took the handle of the saucepan, inserted the point between the hewn stone and rough stones of the wall, and employed it as a lever. A slight oscillation showed Dantès all went well.

At the end of an hour the stone was extricated from the wall, leaving a cavity of a foot and a half in diameter.

Dantès carefully collected the plaster, carried it into the corners of his cell, and covered it with earth. Then, wishing to make the best use of this night, in which chance, or rather his own stratagem, had placed so precious an instrument in his hands, he continued to work without ceasing.

At the dawn of day he replaced the stone, pushed his bed against the wall, and lay down.

The breakfast consisted of a piece of bread; the jailer entered and placed the bread on the table.

"Well, you do not bring me another plate?" said Dantès.

"No," replied the turnkey; "you destroy everything. First you break your jug, then you make me break your plate; if all the prisoners followed your example, the government would be ruined. I shall leave you the saucepan, and pour your soup into that. So for the future I hope you will not be so destructive to your furniture."

Dantès raised his eyes to heaven, clasped his hands beneath the coverlid, and prayed.

He felt more gratitude for the possession of this piece of iron than he had ever felt for anything. He had, however, remarked that the prisoner on the other side had ceased to labour.

All day he toiled on untiringly, and by the evening he had succeeded in extracting ten handfuls of plaster and fragments of stone.

When the hour for his jailer's visit arrived, Dantès

straightened the handle of the saucepan as well as he could, and placed it in its accustomed place. The turnkey poured his ration of soup into it, together with the fish, for thrice a week the prisoners were made to abstain from meat. This would have been a method of reckoning time, had not Dantès long ceased to do so.

Having poured out the soup, the turnkey retired.

Dantès wished to ascertain whether his neighbour had really ceased to work.

He listened.

All was silent, as it had been for the last three days.

Dantès sighed. It was evident that his neighbour distrusted him.

However, he toiled on all the night, without being discouraged; but after two or three hours he encountered an obstacle.

The iron made no impression, but met with a smooth surface. Dantès touched it, and found it was a beam.

This beam crossed, or rather blocked up, the hole Dantès had made.

It was necessary, therefore, to dig above or under it.

The unhappy young man had not thought of this.

"O my God! my God!" murmured he, "I have so earnestly prayed to you, that I hoped my prayers had been heard. After having deprived me of my liberty, after having deprived me of death, after having recalled me to existence, my God! have pity on me, and do not let me die in despair."

"Who talks of God and despair at the same time?" said a voice that seemed to come from beneath the earth, and, deadened by the distance, sounded hollow and sepulchral in the young man's ears.

Edmond's hair stood on end, and he rose on his knees.

"Ah!" said he, "I hear a human voice." Edmond had not heard any one speak save his jailer for four or five years—and a jailer is not a man to a prisoner; he is a living door added to his door of oak, a barrier of flesh and blood added to his barriers of iron.

"In the name of Heaven," cried Dantès, "speak again, though the sound of your voice terrifies me."

"Who are you?" said the voice.

"An unhappy prisoner," replied Dantès, who made no hesitation in answering.

"Of what country?"

"A Frenchman."

"Your name?"

"Edmond Dantès."

"Your profession?"

"A sailor."

"How long have you been here?"

"Since the 28th of February 1815."

"Your crime?"

"I am innocent."

"But of what are you accused?"

"Of having conspired to aid the emperor's return."

"How for the emperor's return? The emperor is no longer on the throne, then?"

"He abdicated at Fontainebleau in 1814, and was sent to the island of Elba. But how long have you been here that you are ignorant of all this?"

"Since 1811."

Dantès shuddered. This man had been four years longer than himself in prison.

"Do not dig any more," said the voice; "only tell me how high up is your excavation?"

"On a level with the floor."

"How is it concealed?"

"Behind my bed."

"Has your bed been moved since you have been a prisoner?"

"No."

"What does your chamber open on?"

"A corridor."

"And the corridor?"

"On a court."

"Alas!" murmured the voice.

"Oh, what is the matter?" cried Dantès.

"I am deceived, and the imperfection of my plans has ruined all. An error of a line in the plan has been equivalent to fifteen feet in reality, and I took the wall you are mining for the wall of the fortress."

"But then you were close to the sea?"

"That is what I hoped."

"And supposing you succeeded?"

"I should have thrown myself into the sea, gained one of the islands near here—the Isle de Daume or the Isle de Tiboulen—and then I was safe."

"Could you have swum so far?"

"Heaven would have given me strength; but now all is lost."

"All?"

"Yes. Stop up your excavation carefully. Do not work any more, and wait until you hear from me."

"Tell me at least who you are."

"I am—I am Number 27."

"You mistrust me, then?" said Dantès.

Edmond fancied he heard a bitter laugh proceed from the unknown.

"Oh, I am a Christian," cried Dantès, guessing instinctively that this man meant to abandon him. "I swear to you by Him who died for us that nought shall induce me to breathe one syllable to my jailers; but I conjure you do not abandon me. If you do, I swear to you that I will dash my brains out against the wall, and you will have my death to reproach yourself with."

"How old are you? Your voice is that of a young man."

"I do not know my age, for I have not counted the years I have been here. All I do know is, that I was just nineteen when I was arrested, the 28th of February 1815."

"Not quite twenty-six!" murmured the voice; "at that age he cannot be a traitor."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Dantès. "I swear to you again, rather than betray you they shall hew me to pieces!"

"You have done well to speak to me and entreat me, for I was about to form another plan and leave you; but your age reassures me. I will not forget you. Expect me."

"When?"

"I must calculate our chances. I will give you the signal."

"But you will not leave me; you will come to me, or you will let me come to you. We will escape, and if we cannot escape we will talk—you of those whom you love, and I of those whom I love. You must love somebody?"

"No; I am alone in the world."

"Then you will love me. If you are young, I will be your comrade; if you are old, I will be your son. I have a father, who is seventy if he yet lives. I only love him and a young girl called Mercédès. My father has not yet forgotten me, I am sure; but God alone knows if she loves me still. I shall love you as I loved my father."

"It is well," returned the voice. "To-morrow."

These few words were uttered with an accent that left no doubt of his sincerity. Dantès rose, dispersed the fragments with the same precaution as before, and pushed back his bed against the wall. He then gave himself up to his happiness; he would no longer be alone. He was, perhaps, about to regain his liberty; at the worst, he would have a companion, and captivity that is shared is but half captivity.

The jailer came in the evening; Dantès was on his bed. It seemed to him that thus he better guarded the unfinished opening. Doubtless there was a strange expression in his eyes, for the jailer said, "Come, are you going mad again?"

Dantès did not answer; he feared that the emotion of his voice would betray him.

The jailer retired, shaking his head.

The night came. Dantès hoped that his neighbour would profit by the silence to address him, but he was mistaken. The next morning, however, just as he removed his bed from the wall, he heard three knocks. He threw himself on his knees.

"Is it you?" said he. "I am here."

"Is your jailer gone?"

"Yes," said Dantès. "He will not return until the evening, so that we have twelve hours before us."

"I can work, then?" said the voice.

"Oh, yes, yes, this instant, I entreat you!"

In an instant the portion of the floor on which Dantès (half buried in the opening) was leaning his two hands gave way; he cast himself back, whilst a mass of stones and earth disappeared in a hole that opened beneath the aperture he himself had formed. Then from the bottom of this passage, the depth of which it was impossible to measure, he saw appear, first the head, then the shoulders, and lastly the body of a man, who sprang lightly into his cell.

CHAPTER XVI.

A LEARNED ITALIAN.

RUSHING towards the friend so long and ardently desired, Dantès almost carried him towards the window, in order to obtain a better view of his features by the aid of the imperfect light that struggled through the grating of the prison.

He was a man of small stature, with hair blanched rather by suffering and sorrow than years; a deep-set, penetrating eye, almost buried beneath the thick gray eyebrow, and a long (and still black) beard reaching down to his breast.

The meagreness of his features, deeply furrowed by

care, joined to the bold outline of his strongly-marked features, announced a man more accustomed to exercise his moral faculties than his physical strength. Large drops of perspiration were now standing on his brow, while his garments hung about him in such rags as to render it useless to form a guess as to their primitive description.

The stranger might have numbered sixty or sixty-five years; but a certain briskness and appearance of vigour in his movements made it probable that he was aged more from captivity than the course of time. He received the enthusiastic greeting of his young acquaintance with evident pleasure, as though his chilled affections seemed rekindled and invigorated by his contact with one so warm and ardent. He thanked him with grateful cordiality for his kindly welcome, although he must at that moment have been suffering bitterly to find another dungeon where he had fondly reckoned on discovering a means of regaining his liberty.

"Let us first see," said he, "whether it is possible to remove the traces of my entrance here; our future comforts depend upon our jailers being entirely ignorant of it."

Advancing to the opening, he stooped and raised the stone as easily as though it had not weighed an ounce; then fitting it into its place, he said,—

"You removed this stone very carelessly; but I suppose you had no tools to aid you?"

"Why!" exclaimed Dantès with astonishment, "do you possess any?"

"I made myself some; and with the exception of a file, I have all that are necessary—a chisel, pincers, and lever."

"Oh, how I should like to see these products of your industry and patience!"

"Well, in the first place, here is my chisel!"

So saying, he displayed a sharp, strong blade, with a handle made of beechwood.

"And with what did you contrive to make that?" inquired Dantès.

"With one of the clamps of my bedstead; and this very tool has sufficed me to hollow out the road by which I came hither, a distance of at least fifty feet."

"Fifty feet!" re-echoed Dantès, with a species of terror.

"Do not speak so loud, young man—don't speak so loud. It frequently occurs in a state prison like this that persons are stationed outside the doors of the cells purposely to overhear the conversation of the prisoners."

"But they believe I am shut up alone here."

"That makes no difference."

"And you say that you penetrated a length of fifty feet to arrive here?"

"I do; that is about the distance that separates your chamber from mine—only, unfortunately, I did not curve aright, for want of the necessary geometrical instruments to calculate my scale of proportion; instead of taking an ellipse of forty feet, I have made fifty. I expected, as I told you, to reach the outer wall, pierce through it, and throw myself into the sea. I have, however, kept along the corridor on which your chamber opens, instead of going beneath it. My labour is all in vain, for I find that the corridor looks into a courtyard filled with soldiers."

"That's true," said Dantès; "but the corridor you speak of only bounds *one* side of my cell. There are three others; do you know anything of their situation?"

"This one is built against the solid rock, and it would take ten experienced miners, duly furnished with the requisite tools, as many years to perforate it. This adjoins the lower part of the governor's apartments, and were we to work our way through, we should only get into some lock-up cellars, where we must necessarily be recaptured. The fourth and last side of your cell looks out—looks out—stop a minute; now where does it open to?"

The side which thus excited curiosity was the one in which was fixed the loophole by which the light was admitted into the chamber. This loophole, which gradually diminished as it approached the outside, until only an opening through which a child could not have passed, was, for better security, furnished with three iron bars, so as to quiet all apprehensions even in the mind of the most suspicious jailer as to the possibility of a prisoner's escape.

As the stranger finished his self-put question, he dragged the table beneath the window.

"Climb up," said he to Dantès.

The young man obeyed, mounted on the table, and, divining the intentions of his companion, placed his back securely against the wall, and held out both hands. The stranger, whom as yet Dantès knew only by his assumed title of the number of his cell, sprang up with an agility by no means to be expected in a person of his years, and, light and steady as the bound of a cat or a lizard, climbed from the table to the outstretched hands of Dantès, and from them to his shoulders; then, almost doubling himself in two—for the ceiling of the dungeon prevented his holding himself erect—he managed to slip his head through the top bar of the window, so as to be able to command a perfect view from top to bottom.

An instant afterwards he hastily drew back his head, saying, "I thought so!" and sliding from the shoulders of Dantès as dexterously as he had ascended, he nimbly leapt from the table to the ground.

"What made you say those words?" asked the young man in an anxious tone, in his turn descending from the table.

The elder prisoner appeared to meditate. "Yes," said he at length, "it is so. This side of your chamber looks out upon a kind of open gallery, where patrols are continually passing, and sentries keep watch day and night."

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"Certain. I saw the soldier's shako and the top of his musket; that made me draw in my head so quickly, for I was fearful he might also see me."

"Well?" inquired Dantès.

"You perceive, then, the utter impossibility of escaping through your dungeon?"

"Then?——" pursued the young man eagerly.

"Then," answered the elder prisoner, "the will of God be done!" And as the old man slowly pronounced those words, an air of profound resignation spread itself over his careworn countenance.

Dantès gazed on the individual who could thus philosophically resign hopes so long and ardently nourished with an astonishment mingled with admiration.

"Tell me, I entreat of you, who and what you are?" said he at length. "Never have I met with so remarkable a person as yourself."

"Willingly," answered the stranger, "if, indeed, you feel any curiosity respecting one now, alas! powerless to aid you in any way."

"Say not so; you can console and support me by the strength of your own powerful mind. Pray let me know who you really are?"

The stranger smiled a melancholy smile. "Then listen," said he. "I am the Abbé Faria, and have been imprisoned in this Château d'If since the year 1811, previously to which I had been confined for three years in the fortress of Fenestrelle. In the year 1811 I was transferred to Piedmont in France. It was at this period I learned that the destiny which seemed subservient to every wish formed by Napoleon had bestowed on him a son, named king of Rome even in his cradle. I was very far then from expecting the change you have just informed me of—namely, that four years afterwards this colossus of power would be overthrown. Then who reigns in France at this moment? Napoleon II.?"

"No; Louis XVIII.?"

"The brother of Louis XVI.! How inscrutable are

the ways of Providence! For what great and mysterious purpose has it pleased Heaven to abase the man once so elevated, and raise up the individual so beaten down and depressed?"

"But wherefore are you here?"

"Because in 1807 I meditated the very scheme Napoleon wished to realize in 1811; because, like Machiavel, I desired to alter the political face of Italy, and instead of allowing it to be split up into a quantity of petty principalities, each held by some weak or tyrannical ruler, I sought to form one large, compact, and powerful empire; and, lastly, because I fancied I had found my Cæsar Borgia in a crowned simpleton, who feigned to enter into my views only to betray me. It was projected equally by Alexander VI. and Clement VII., but it will never succeed now, for they attempted it fruitlessly, and Napoleon was unable to complete his work. Italy seems fated to be unlucky." The old man uttered these last words in a tone of deep dejection, and his head fell listlessly on his breast.

"Pray excuse my question," said Dantès, beginning to partake of the jailer's opinion touching the state of the abbé's brain, "but are you not the priest who is considered throughout the Château d'If—to—be—ill?"

"Mad, you mean, don't you?"

"I did not like to say so," answered Dantès, smiling.

"Well, then," resumed Faria, with a bitter smile, "let me answer your question in full, by acknowledging that I am the poor mad prisoner of the Château d'If, for many years permitted to amuse the different visitants to the prison with what is said to be my insanity; and, in all probability, I should be promoted to the honour of making sport for the children, if such innocent beings could be found in an abode devoted like this to suffering and despair."

Dantès remained for a short time mute and motionless. At length he said,—

"Then you abandon all hope of flight?"

"I perceive its utter impossibility; and I consider it impious to attempt that which the Almighty evidently does not approve."

Dantès held down his head, that his companion might not perceive how little of real regret at the failure of the scheme was expressed on his countenance; but, in truth, the young man could entertain no other feeling than delight at finding his prison would be no longer solitary or uncheered by human participation.

After continuing some time in profound meditation, the young man suddenly exclaimed, "I have found what you were in search of!"

Faria started. "Have you indeed?" cried he, raising his head with quick anxiety. "Pray let me know what it is you have discovered."

"The corridor through which you have bored your way from the cell you occupy here, extends in the same direction as the outer gallery, does it not?"

"It does."

"And is not above fifteen steps from it?"

"About that!"

"Well, then, I will tell you what we must do. We must pierce through the corridor by forming a side opening about the middle, as it were the top part of a cross. This time you will lay your plans more accurately; we shall get out into the gallery you have described, kill the sentinel who guards it, and make our escape. All we require to ensure success is courage, and that you possess, and strength, which I am not deficient in; as for patience, you have abundantly proved yours—you shall now see me prove mine."

"One instant, my dear friend," replied the abbé; "it is clear you do not understand the nature of the courage with which I am endowed, and what use I intend making of my strength. As for patience, I consider I have abundantly exercised that on recommencing every morning the task of the overnight, and every night beginning again the task of the day. But then,

young man (and I pray of you to give me your full attention), then I thought I could not be doing anything displeasing to the Almighty in trying to set an innocent being at liberty—one who had committed no offence, and merited not condemnation."

"And have your notions changed?" asked Dantès, with much surprise; "do you think yourself more guilty in making the attempt since you have encountered me?"

"No; neither do I wish to incur guilt. Hitherto I fancied myself merely waging war against circumstances, not men. I have thought it no sin to bore through a wall, or destroy a staircase; but I cannot so easily persuade myself to pierce a heart or take away a life."

"Since my imprisonment," continued Faria, "I have thought over all the most celebrated cases of escape recorded. Among the many that have failed in obtaining the ultimate release of the prisoner, I consider there has been a precipitation—a haste wholly incompatible with such undertakings. Those escapes that have been crowned with full success have been long meditated upon and carefully arranged—such, for instance, as the escape of the Duke de Beaufort from the Château de Vincennes; that of the Abbé Dubuquoi from For l'Evêque; Latude's from the Bastille, with similar cases of successful evasion; and I have come to the conclusion that chance frequently affords opportunities we should never ourselves have thought of. Let us, therefore, wait patiently for some favourable moment; rely upon it, you will not find me more backward than yourself in seizing it."

"Ah!" said Dantès, "you might well endure the tedious delay. You were constantly occupied in the task you set yourself; and when weary with toil, you had your hopes to refresh and encourage you."

"I assure you," replied the old man, "I did not turn to that source for recreation or support."

"What did you do, then?"

"I wrote or studied."

"Were you, then, permitted the use of pens, ink, and paper?"

"Oh, no," answered the abbé; "I had none but what I made for myself."

"Do you mean to tell me," exclaimed Dantès, "that you could invent all those things—for real ones you could not procure unaided?"

"I do, indeed, truly say so."

Dantès gazed with kindling eyes and rapidly increasing admiration on the wonderful being whose hand seemed gifted with the power of a magician's wand. Some doubt, however, still lingered in his mind, which was quickly perceived by the penetrating eye of the abbé.

"When you pay me a visit in my cell, my young friend," said he, "I will show you an entire work, the fruits of the thoughts and reflections of my whole life; many of them meditated over in the ruins of the Coliseum of Rome, at the foot of St. Mark's Column at Venice, and on the borders of the Arno at Florence, little imagining at the time that they would be arranged in order within the walls of the Château d'If. The work I speak of is called '*A Treatise on the Practicability of forming Italy into one General Monarchy*,' and will make one large quarto volume."

"And on what have you written all this?"

"On two of my shirts. I invented a preparation that makes linen as smooth and as easy to write on as parchment."

"You are, then, a chemist?"

"Somewhat. I know Lavoisier, and was the intimate friend of Cabanis."

"But for such a work you must have needed books. Had you any?"

"I possessed nearly five thousand volumes in my library at Rome; but after reading them over many times, I found out that with a hundred and fifty well-chosen books a man possesses a complete analysis of all human

knowledge, or at least all that is either useful or desirable to be acquainted with. I devoted three years of my life to reading and studying these hundred and fifty volumes, till I knew them nearly by heart. So that since I have been in prison, a very slight effort of memory has enabled me to recall their contents as readily as though the pages were open before me. I could recite you the whole of Thucydides, Xenophon, Plutarch, Titus Livius, Tacitus, Strada, Jornandès, Dante, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Spinosa, Machiavel, and Bossuet. Observe, I merely quote the most important names and writers."

Stronger grew the wonder of Dantès, who almost fancied he had to do with one gifted with supernatural powers; still hoping to find some imperfection which might bring him down to a level with human beings, he added, "Then if you were not furnished with pens, how did you manage to write the work you speak of?"

"I made myself some excellent ones, which would be universally preferred to all others if once known. You are aware what huge whitings are served to us on *maigre* days. Well, I selected the cartilages of the heads of these fishes, and you can scarcely imagine the delight with which I welcomed the arrival of each Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, as affording me the means of increasing my stock of pens; for I will freely confess that my historical labours have been my greatest solace and relief. While retracing the past, I forget the present; and while following the free and independent course of historical record, I cease to remember that I am myself immured within the gloomy walls of a dungeon."

"But the ink requisite for copying down your ideas," said Dantès; "how have you procured that?"

"I will tell you," replied Faria. "There was formerly a fireplace in my dungeon, but closed up long ere I became an occupant of this prison. Still it must have been many years in use, for it was thickly covered with a coating of soot; this soot I dissolved in a portion of the wine brought to me every Sunday, and I assure you

a better ink cannot be desired. For very important notes, for which closer attention is required, I have pricked one of my fingers, and written the facts claiming notice in blood."

"And when," asked Dantès, "will you show me all this?"

"Whenever you please," replied the abbé.

"Oh, then, let it be directly!" exclaimed the young man.

"Follow me, then," said the abbé, as he re-entered the subterraneous passage, in which he soon disappeared, followed by Dantès.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ABBÉ'S CHAMBER.

AFTER having passed with tolerable ease through the subterranean passage, which, however, did not permit of their holding themselves erect, the two friends reached the farther end of the corridor, into which the cell of the abbé opened; from that point the opening became much narrower, barely permitting an individual to creep through on his hands and knees. The floor of the abbé's cell was paved, and it had been by raising one of the stones in the most obscure corner that Faria had been able to commence the laborious task of which Dantès had witnessed the completion.

As he entered the chamber of his friend, Dantès cast around one eager and searching glance in quest of the expected marvels; but nothing more than common met his view.

"It is well," said the abbé; "we have some hours before us—it is now just a quarter past twelve o'clock."

Instinctively Dantès turned round to observe by what watch or clock the abbé had been able so accurately to specify the hour.

"Look at this ray of light which enters by my window," said the abbé, "and then observe the lines traced on the wall. Well, by means of these lines, which are in accordance with the double motion of the earth, as well as the ellipses it describes round the sun, I am enabled to ascertain the precise hour with more minuteness than if I possessed a watch; for that might be broken or deranged in its movements, while the sun and earth never vary in their appointed paths."

This last explanation was wholly lost upon Dantès, who had always imagined, from seeing the sun rise from behind the mountains and set in the Mediterranean, that it moved, and not the earth.

"Come!" said he to the abbé, "show me the wonderful inventions you told me of—I am all impatience to behold them."

The abbé smiled, and proceeding to the disused fireplace, raised, by the help of his chisel, a long stone which had doubtless been the hearth, beneath which was a cavity of considerable depth, serving as a safe depository of the articles mentioned to Dantès.

"What do you wish to see first?" asked the abbé.

"Oh, your great work on the monarchy of Italy!"

Faria then drew forth from its hiding-place three or four rolls of linen, laid one over the other, like the folds of papyrus found in mummy-cases. These rolls consisted of slips of cloth about four inches wide and eighteen long; they were all carefully numbered and closely covered with writing, so legible that Dantès could easily read it, as well as make out the sense—it being in Italian, a language he, as a Provençal, perfectly understood.

"There!" said he, "there is the work complete—I wrote the word *finis* at the end of the last page about a week ago. I have torn up two of my shirts, and as many handkerchiefs as I was master of, to complete the precious pages. Should I ever get out of prison, and find a printer courageous enough to publish what I have composed, my literary reputation is for ever secured."

"I see," answered Dantès. "Now let me behold the curious pens with which you have written your work."

"Look!" said Faria, showing to the young man a slender stick about six inches long, and much resembling the size of the handle of a fine painting-brush, to the end of which was tied by a piece of thread one of those cartilages of which the abbé had before spoken to Dantès; it was pointed, and divided at the nib like an ordinary pen.

Dantès examined it with intense admiration, then looked around to see the instrument with which it had been shaped so correctly into form.

"Ah, I see!" said Faria; "you are wondering where I found my penknife, are not you? Well, I must confess that I look upon that article of my ingenuity as the very perfection of all my handiworks. I made it, as well as this knife, out of an old iron candlestick." The penknife was sharp and keen as a razor; as for the other knife, it possessed the double advantage of being capable of serving either as a dagger or a knife.

Dantès examined the various articles shown to him with the same attention he had bestowed on the curiosities and strange tools exhibited in the shops at Marseilles as the works of the savages in the South Seas, from whence they had been brought by the different trading vessels.

"As for the ink," said Faria, "I told you how I managed to obtain that; and I only just make it from time to time, as I require it."

"There is one thing puzzles me still," observed Dantès, "and that is, how you managed to do all this by daylight?"

"I worked at night also," replied Faria.

"Night!—why, for Heaven's sake, are your eyes like cats', that you can see to work in the dark?"

"Indeed they are not; but a beneficent Creator has supplied man with intelligence and ability to supply the want of the power you allude to. I furnished myself with a light quite as good as that possessed by the cat."

"You did? Pray tell me how."

"I separated the fat from the meat served to me, melted it, and made a most capital oil—here is my lamp." So saying, the abbé exhibited a sort of vessel very similar to those employed upon the occasion of public illuminations.

"But how do you procure a light?"

"Oh, here are two flints and a morsel of burnt linen."

"And your matches?"

"Were easily prepared. I feigned a disorder of the skin, and asked for a little sulphur, which was readily supplied."

Dantès laid the different things he had been looking at gently on the table, and stood with his head drooping on his breast, as though overwhelmed by the persevering spirit and strength of character developed in each fresh trait of his new-found friend's conduct.

"You have not seen all yet," continued Faria, "for I did not think it wise to trust all my treasures in the same hiding-place. Let us shut this one up, and then you shall see what else I have to display."

Dantès helped him to replace the stone as they first found it; the abbé sprinkled a little dust over it to conceal the traces of its having been removed, rubbed his foot well on it to make it assume the same appearance as the other, and then, going towards his bed, he removed it from the spot it stood in. Behind the head of the bed, and concealed by a stone fitting in so closely as to defy all suspicion, was a hollow space, and in this space a ladder of cords between twenty-five and thirty feet in length.

Dantès closely and eagerly examined it; he found it firm, solid, and compact enough to bear any weight.

"Who supplied you with the materials for making this wonderful work?" asked Dantès.

"No one but myself. I tore up several of my shirts, and unravelled the sheets of my bed, during my three

years' imprisonment at Fenestrelle; and when I was removed to the Château d'If, I managed to bring the ravellings with me, so that I have been able to finish my work here."

"And was it not discovered that your sheets were unhemmed?"

"Oh no! for when I had taken out the thread I required, I hemmed the edges over again."

"With what?"

"With this needle!" said the abbé, as, opening his ragged vestments, he showed Dantès a long, sharp fish-bone, with a small perforated eye for the thread, a small portion of which still remained in it. "I once thought," continued Faria, "of removing these iron bars, and letting myself down from the window, which, as you see, is somewhat wider than yours, although I should have enlarged it still more preparatory to my flight. However, I discovered that I should merely have dropped into a sort of inner court, and I therefore renounced the project altogether, as too full of risk and danger. Nevertheless, I carefully preserved my ladder against one of those unforeseen opportunities of which I spoke just now, and which sudden chance frequently brings about."

While affecting to be deeply engaged in examining the ladder, the mind of Dantès was, in fact, busily occupied by the idea that a person so intelligent, ingenious, and clear-sighted as the abbé might probably be enabled to dive into the dark recesses of his own misfortunes, and cause that light to shine upon the mystery connected with them he had in vain sought to elicit.

"What are you thinking of?" asked the abbé smilingly, imputing the deep abstraction in which his visitor was plunged to the excess of his awe and wonder.

"I was reflecting, in the first place," replied Dantès, "upon the enormous degree of intelligence and ability you must have employed to reach the high perfection to which you have attained. If you thus surpass all man-

kind while but a prisoner, what would you not have accomplished free?"

"Possibly nothing at all; the overflow of my brain would probably, in a state of freedom, have evaporated in a thousand follies. It needs trouble and difficulty and danger to hollow out various mysterious and hidden mines of human intelligence. But you had another subject for your thoughts besides admiration for me. Did you not say so just now?"

"I did!"

"You have told me as yet but one of them; let me hear the other."

"It was this: that while you had related to me all the particulars of your past life, you were perfectly unacquainted with mine."

"Your life, my young friend, has not been of sufficient length to admit of your having passed through any very important events."

"It has been long enough to inflict on me a misfortune so great, so crushingly overwhelming, that, unconscious as I am of having in any way deserved it, I would fain know who, of all mankind, has been the accursed author of it, that I may no longer accuse Heaven, as I have done in my fury and despair, of wilful injustice towards an innocent and injured man."

"Then you profess ignorance of the crime with which you are charged?"

"I do, indeed; and this I swear by the two beings most dear to me upon earth—my father and Mercédès."

"Come," said the abbé, closing his hiding-place, and pushing the bed back to its original situation, "let me hear your story."

Dantès obeyed, and commenced what he called his history. His recital finished, the abbé reflected long and earnestly.

"There is," said he, at the end of his meditations, "a sound maxim that if you wish to discover the author of any bad action, seek first to discover the person to

whom the perpetration of that bad action could be in any way advantageous. Now, to apply it in your case: to whom could your disappearance have been serviceable?"

"To no breathing soul. Why, who could have cared about the removal of so insignificant a person as myself?"

"Do not speak thus, for your reply evinces neither logic nor philosophy. You say you were on the point of being appointed captain of the *Pharaon?*"

"I was."

"And about to become the husband of a young and lovely girl?"

"True."

"Now could any one have had an interest in preventing the accomplishment of these two circumstances? But let us first settle the question as to its being the interest of any one to hinder you from being captain of the *Pharaon.* What say you?"

"I cannot believe such was the case. I was generally liked on board; and had the sailors possessed the right of selecting the captain themselves, I feel convinced their choice would have fallen on me. There was only one person among the crew who had any feeling of ill-will towards me. I had quarrelled with him some time previously, and had even challenged him to fight me; but he refused."

"Now we are getting on. And what was this man's name?"

"Danglars."

"What rank did he hold on board?"

"He was supercargo."

"And had you been captain, should you have retained him in his employment?"

"Not if the choice had remained with me, for I had frequently observed inaccuracies in his accounts."

"Good again! Now then, tell me, was any person present during your last conversation with Captain Leclere?"

"No; we were quite alone."

"Could your conversation be overheard by any one?"

"It might, for the cabin door was open; and—stay—now I recollect—Danglars himself passed by just as Captain Leclere was giving me the packet for the grand maréchal."

"That will do," cried the abbé; "now we are on the right scent. Did you take anybody with you when you put into the port of Elba?"

"Nobody."

"Somebody there received your packet, and gave you a letter in place of it, I think?"

"Yes; the grand maréchal did."

"And what did you do with that letter?"

"Put it into my pocket-book."

"Ah, indeed! You had your pocket-book with you, then? Now, how could a pocket-book, large enough to contain an official letter, find sufficient room in the pockets of a sailor?"

"You are right. I had it not with me—it was left on board."

"Then it was not till your return to the ship that you placed the letter in the pocket-book?"

"No."

"And what did you do with this same letter while returning from Porto-Ferrajo to your vessel?"

"I carried it in my hand."

"So that when you went on board the *Pharaon* everybody could perceive you held a letter in your hand?"

"To be sure they could."

"Danglars as well as the rest?"

"Yes; he as well as others."

"Now, listen to me, and try to recall every circumstance attending your arrest. Do you recollect the words in which the information against you was couched?"

"Oh yes. I read it over three times, and the words sank deeply into my memory."

"Repeat it to me."

Dantès paused a few instants as though collecting his ideas, then said, "This is it, word for word: 'M. le Procureur du Roi is informed by a friend to the throne and religion, that an individual, named Edmond Dantès, second in command on board the *Pharaon*, this day arrived from Smyrna, after having touched at Naples and Porto-Ferrajo, has been charged by Murat with a packet for the usurper; again, by the usurper, with a letter for the Bonapartist Club in Paris. This proof of his guilt may be procured by his immediate arrest, as the letter will be found either about his person, at his father's residence, or in his cabin on board the *Pharaon*.'"

The abbé shrugged up his shoulders. "The thing is clear as day," said he; "and you must have had a very unsuspecting nature, as well as a good heart, not to have suspected the origin of the whole affair."

"Do you really think so? Ah, that would indeed be the treachery of a villain!"

"How did Danglars usually write?"

"Oh, extremely well."

"And how was the anonymous letter written?"

"All the wrong way—backwards, you know."

Again the abbé smiled. "In fact it was a disguised hand?"

"I don't know; it was very boldly written, if disguised."

"Stop a bit," said the abbé, taking up what he called his pen, and, after dipping it into the ink, he wrote on a morsel of prepared linen, with his left hand, the first two or three words of the accusation. Dantès drew back, and gazed on the abbé with a sensation almost amounting to terror.

"How very astonishing!" cried he, at length. "Why, your writing exactly resembles that of the accusation!"

"Simply because that accusation had been written with the left hand; and I have always remarked one thing——"

"What is that?"

"That whereas all writing done with the right hand varies, that performed with the left hand is invariably similar."

"You have evidently seen and observed everything."

"Let us proceed."

"Oh, yes, yes! Let us go on."

"Now as regards the second question. Was there any person whose interest it was to prevent your marriage with Mercédès?"

"Yes, a young man who loved her."

"And his name was——"

"Fernand."

"That is a Spanish name, I think?"

"He was a Catalan."

"You imagine him capable of writing the letter?"

"Oh, no; he would more likely have got rid of me by sticking a knife into me."

"That is in strict accordance with the Spanish character; an assassination they will unhesitatingly commit, but an act of cowardice never."

"Besides," said Dantès, "the various circumstances mentioned in the letter were wholly unknown to him."

"You had never spoken of them yourself to any one?"

"To no person whatever."

"Not even to your mistress?"

"No, not even to my betrothed bride."

"Then it is Danglars, beyond a doubt."

"I feel quite sure of it now."

"Wait a little. Pray was Danglars acquainted with Fernand?"

"No—yes, he was. Now I recollect——"

"What?"

"To have seen them both sitting at table together beneath an arbour at Père Pamphile the evening before the day fixed for my wedding. They were in earnest conversation. Danglars was joking in a friendly way, but Fernand looked pale and agitated."

"Were they alone?"

"There was a third person with them, whom I knew perfectly well, and who had, in all probability, made their acquaintance; he was a tailor named Caderousse, but he was quite intoxicated. Stay!—stay! How strange that it should not have occurred to me before! Now I remember quite well that on the table round which they were sitting were pens, ink, and paper. Oh, the heartless, treacherous scoundrels!" exclaimed Dantès, pressing his hand to his throbbing brows.

"Is there anything else I can assist you in discovering besides the villainy of your friends?" inquired the abbé.

"Yes, yes," replied Dantès eagerly. "I would beg of you, who see so completely to the depths of things, and to whom the greatest mystery seems but an easy riddle, to explain to me how it was that I underwent no second examination, was never brought to trial, and, above all, my being condemned without ever having had sentence passed on me?"

"That is altogether a different and more serious matter," responded the abbé. "If you wish me to enter upon the more difficult part of the business, you must assist me by the most minute information on every point. In the first place, then, who examined you—the procureur du roi, his deputy, or a magistrate?"

"The deputy."

"Was he young or old?"

"About six or seven and twenty years of age, I should say."

"To be sure," answered the abbé. "Old enough to be ambitious, but not sufficiently so to have hardened his heart. And how did he treat you?"

"With more of mildness than severity."

"Did you tell him your whole story?"

"I did."

"And did his conduct change at all in the course of your examination?"

"Yes; certainly he did appear much disturbed when he read the letter that has brought me into this scrape. He seemed quite overcome at the thoughts of the danger I was in."

"*You* were in?"

"Yes; for whom else could he have felt any apprehensions?"

"Then you feel quite convinced he sincerely pitied your misfortune?"

"Why, he gave me one great proof of his sympathy, at least."

"And what was that?"

"He burnt the sole proof that could at all have criminated me."

"Do you mean the letter of accusation?"

"Oh, no! the letter I was intrusted to convey to Paris."

"Are you sure he burnt it?"

"He did so before my eyes."

"Ay, indeed! that alters the case, and leads to the conclusion that this man might, after all, be a greater scoundrel than I at first believed."

"Upon my word," said Dantès, "you make me shudder. If I listen much longer to you, I shall believe the world is filled with tigers and crocodiles."

"Only remember that two-legged tigers and crocodiles are more dangerous than those that walk on four."

"Never mind, let us go on."

"With all my heart! You tell me he burnt the letter in your presence?"

"He did; saying at the same time, 'You see I thus destroy the only proof existing against you.'"

"This action is somewhat too sublime to be natural."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it. To whom was this letter addressed?"

"To M. Noirtier, No. 13 Rue Coq-Héron, Paris."

"Now can you conceive any interest your heroic

deputy-procureur could by possibility have had in the destruction of that letter ?"

"Why, it is not altogether impossible he might have had, for he made me promise several times never to speak of that letter to any one, assuring me he so advised me for my own interest ; and more than this, he insisted on my taking a solemn oath never to utter the name mentioned in the address."

"Noirtier !" repeated the abbé ; "Noirtier ! I knew a person of that name at the court of the queen of Etruria—a Noirtier who had been a Girondin during the revolution ! What was your deputy called ?"

"De Villefort !'

The abbé burst into a fit of laughter ; while Dantès gazed on him in utter astonishment.

"What ails you ?" said he at length.

"Do you see this ray of light ?"

"I do."

"Well, I see my way into the full meaning of all the proceedings against you more clearly than you even discern that sunbeam. Poor fellow ! poor young man ! And you tell me this magistrate expressed great sympathy and commiseration for you ?"

"He did !"

"And the worthy man destroyed your compromising letter ?"

"He burnt it before me !"

"And then made you swear never to utter the name of Noirtier ?"

"Certainly !"

"Why, you poor short-sighted simpleton, can you not guess who this Noirtier was, whose very name he was so careful to keep concealed ?"

"Indeed I cannot !"

"No other than the father of your sympathetic deputy-procureur."

Had a thunderbolt fallen at the feet of Dantès, or hell opened its yawning gulf before him, he could not have

been more completely transfixed with horror than at the sound of words so wholly unexpected. Starting up, he clasped his hands around his head as though to prevent his very brain from bursting, as in a choked and almost inarticulate voice he exclaimed, "His father! Oh, no! not his father, surely!"

"His own father, I assure you," replied the abbé. "His right name was Noirtier de Villefort!"

At this instant a bright light shot through the mind of Dantès, and cleared up all that had been dark and obscure before. The change that had come over Villefort during the examination; the destruction of the letter; the exacted promise; the almost supplicating tones of the magistrate, who seemed rather to implore mercy than denounce punishment—all returned with a stunning force to his memory. A cry of mental agony escaped his lips, and he staggered against the wall almost like a drunken man; then, as the paroxysm passed away, he hurried to the opening conducting from the abbé's cell to his own, and said,—

"I must be alone, to think over all this."

When he regained his dungeon he threw himself on his bed, where the turnkey found him at his evening visit, sitting, with fixed gaze and contracted features, still and motionless as a statue; but during hours of deep meditation, which to him had seemed but as minutes, he had formed a fearful resolution, and bound himself to its fulfilment by a solemn oath.

Dantès was at length roused from his reverie by the voice of Faria, who, having also been visited by his jailer, had come to invite his fellow-sufferer to share his supper.

The reputation of being out of his mind, though harmlessly and even amusingly so, had procured for the abbé greater privileges than were allowed to prisoners in general. He was supplied with bread of a finer, whiter description than the usual prison fare, and even regaled each Sunday with a small quantity of wine. The

present day chanced to be Sunday, and the abbé came delighted at having such luxuries to offer his new friend.

Dantès followed him with a firm and assured step: his features had lost their almost spasmodic contraction, and now wore their usual expression; but there was that in his whole appearance that bespoke one who had come to a fixed and desperate resolve.

Faria bent on him his penetrating eye. "I regret now," said he, "having helped you in your late inquiries, or having given you the information I did."

"Why so?" inquired Dantès.

"Because it has instilled a new passion in your heart —that of vengeance."

A bitter smile played over the features of the young man. "Let us talk of something else," said he.

Again the abbé looked at him, then mournfully shook his head; but, in accordance with Dantès's request, he began to speak of other matters.

"You must teach me a small part of what you know," said Dantès, "if only to prevent your growing weary of me. I can well believe that so learned a person as yourself would prefer absolute solitude to being tormented with the company of one as ignorant and uninformed as myself. If you will only agree to my request, I promise you never to mention another word about escaping."

The abbé smiled. "Alas! my child," said he, "human knowledge is confined within very narrow limits; and when I have taught you mathematics, physics, history, and the three or four modern languages with which I am acquainted, you will know as much as I do myself. Now, it will scarcely require two years for me to communicate to you the stock of learning I possess."

"Two years!" exclaimed Dantès. "Do you really believe I can acquire all these things in so short a time?"

"Not their application, certainly, but their principles you may. To learn is not to know; there are

the learners and the learned. Memory makes the one, philosophy the other."

"But can I not learn philosophy as well as other things?"

"My son, philosophy, as I understand it, is reducible to no rules by which it can be learned; it is the amalgamation of all the sciences, the golden cloud which bears the soul to heaven."

"Well, then," said Dantès, "leaving philosophy out of the question, tell me what you shall teach me first. I feel my great need of scientific knowledge, and long to begin the work of improvement. Say, when shall we commence?"

"Directly, if you will," said the abbé.

And that very evening the prisoners sketched a plan of education, to be entered upon the following day.

Dantès possessed a prodigious memory, combined with an astonishing quickness and readiness of conception; the mathematical turn of his mind rendered him apt at all kinds of calculation, while his naturally poetical feelings threw a light and pleasing veil over the dry reality of arithmetical computation or the rigid severity of lines. He already knew Italian, and had also picked up a little of the Romaic dialect during his different voyages to the East; and by the aid of these two languages he easily comprehended the construction of all the others, so that at the end of six months he began to speak Spanish, English, and German.

In strict accordance with the promise made to the abbé, Dantès never even alluded to flight. It might have been that the delight his studies afforded him supplied the place of liberty; or, probably, the recollection of his pledged word (a point, as we have already seen, to which he paid a rigid attention) kept him from reverting to any plan for escape; but absorbed in the acquisition of knowledge, days, even months, passed by unheeded in one rapid and instructive course; time flew on, and at the end of a year Dantès was a new man. With Faria,

on the contrary, Dantès remarked that, spite of the relief his society afforded, he daily grew sadder; one thought seemed incessantly to harass and distract his mind. Sometimes he would fall into long reveries, sigh heavily and involuntarily, then suddenly rise, and, with folded arms, begin pacing the confined space of his dungeon.

One day he stopped all at once in the midst of these so often repeated promenades, and exclaimed, "Ah, if there were no sentinel!"

"There shall not be one a minute longer than you please," said Dantès, who had followed the working of his thoughts as accurately as though his brain were enclosed in crystal so clear as to display its minutest operations.

"I have already told you," answered the abbé, "that I loathe the idea of shedding blood."

"Still, in our case, the death we should bestow would not be dictated by any wild or savage propensity, but as a necessary step to secure our own personal safety and preservation."

"No matter; I could never agree to it!"

"Still, you have thought of it?"

"Incessantly, alas!" cried the abbé.

"And you have discovered a means of regaining our freedom, have you not?" asked Dantès eagerly.

"I have; if it were only possible to place a deaf and blind sentinel in the gallery beyond us."

"I will undertake to render him both," replied the young man, with an air of determined resolution that made his companion shudder.

"No, no!" cried the abbé; "I tell you the thing is impossible. Name it no more!"

In vain did Dantès endeavour to renew the subject; the abbé shook his head in token of disapproval, but refused any further conversation respecting it.

Three months passed away.

"Do you feel yourself strong?" inquired the abbé of Dantès.

The young man, in reply, took up the chisel, bent it into the form of a horse-shoe, and then as readily straightened it.

"And will you engage not to do any harm to the sentry, except as a last extremity?"

"I promise on my honour not to hurt a hair of his head, unless positively obliged for our mutual preservation."

"Then," said the abbé, "we may hope to put our design into execution."

"And how long shall we be in accomplishing the necessary work?"

"At least a year."

"And shall we begin at once?"

"Directly!"

"We have lost a year to no purpose!" cried Dantès.

"Do you consider the last twelve months as wasted?" asked the abbé, in a tone of mild reproach.

"Forgive me!" cried Edmond, blushing deeply. "I am indeed ungrateful to have hinted such a thing."

"Tut, tut!" answered the abbé, "man is but man at last, and you are about the best specimen of the genus I have ever known. Come, let me show you my plan."

The abbé then showed Dantès the sketch he had made for their escape. It consisted of a plan of his own cell and that of Dantès, with the corridor which united them. In this passage he proposed to form a tunnel, such as is employed in mines; this tunnel would conduct the two prisoners immediately beneath the gallery where the sentry kept watch; once there, a large excavation would be made, and one of the flagstones with which the gallery was paved be so completely loosened that at the desired moment it would give way beneath the soldier's feet, who, falling into the excavation below would be immediately bound and gagged, ere, stunned by the effects of his fall, he had power to offer any resistance. The prisoners were then to make their way through one of the gallery windows, and to let themselves down from the outer walls by means of the abbé's

ladder of cords. The eyes of Dantès sparkled with joy, and he rubbed his hands with delight at the idea of a plan so simple, yet apparently so certain to succeed.

That very day the miners commenced their labours, and that with so much more vigour and alacrity as it succeeded to a long rest from fatigue, and was destined, in all probability, to carry out the dearest wish of the heart of each.

Nothing interrupted the progress of their work except the necessity of returning to their respective cells against the hour in which their jailer was in the habit of visiting them. They had learned to distinguish the almost imperceptible sound of his footsteps as he descended towards their dungeons, and happily never failed being prepared for his coming.

The fresh earth excavated during their present work, and which would have entirely blocked up the old passage, was thrown, by degrees and with the utmost precaution, out of the window in either Faria's or Dantès's cell, the rubbish being first pulverized so finely that the night wind carried it far away without permitting the smallest trace to remain.

More than a year had been consumed in this undertaking, the only tools for which had been a chisel, a knife, and a wooden lever; Faria still continuing to instruct Dantès by conversing with him, sometimes in one language, sometimes in another; at others relating to him the history of nations and great men who from time to time have left behind them one of those bright tracks called glory.

At the end of fifteen months the tunnel was made, and the excavation completed beneath the gallery, and the two workmen could distinctly hear the measured tread of the sentinel as he paced to and fro over their heads.

Compelled, as they were, to await a night sufficiently dark to favour their flight, they were obliged to defer their final attempt till that auspicious moment should

arrive; their greatest dread now was lest the stone through which the sentry was doomed to fall should give way before its right time, and this they had in some measure provided against, by placing under it, as a kind of prop, a sort of bearer they had discovered among the foundations through which they had worked their way. Dantès was occupied in arranging this piece of wood when he heard Faria, who had remained in Edmond's cell for the purpose of cutting a peg to secure their rope-ladder, call to him in accents of pain and suffering. Dantès hastened to his dungeon, where he found him standing in the middle of the room, pale as death, his forehead streaming with perspiration, and his hands clenched tightly together.

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed Dantès, "what is the matter? What has happened?"

"Quick, quick!" returned the abbé; "listen to what I have to say."

Dantès looked in fear and wonder at the livid countenance of Faria, whose eyes, already dull and sunken, were circled by a halo of a bluish cast; his lips were white as those of a corpse, and his very hair seemed to stand on end.

"For God's sake!" cried Dantès, "what is the meaning of this? Tell me, I beseech you, what ails you?"

"Alas!" faltered out the abbé, "all is over with me. I am seized with a terrible, perhaps mortal illness. I can feel that the paroxysm is fast approaching. I had a similar attack the year previous to my imprisonment. This malady admits but of one remedy; I will tell you what that is. Go into my cell as quickly as you can; draw out one of the feet that support the bed. You will find it has been hollowed out for the purpose of containing a small phial you will see there half filled with a red-looking fluid. Bring it to me—or rather—no, no!—I may be found here; therefore help me back to my room while I have any strength to drag myself along.

Who knows what may happen, or how long the fit may last?"

Spite of the magnitude of the misfortune which thus suddenly frustrated his hopes, Dantès lost not his presence of mind, but descended into the corridor, dragging his unfortunate companion with him; then, half carrying, half supporting him, he managed to reach the abbé's chamber, when he immediately laid the sufferer on his bed.

"Thanks!" said the poor abbé, shivering as though his veins were filled with ice. "Now that I am safely here, let me explain to you the nature of my attack, and the appearance it will present. I am seized with a fit of catalepsy; when it comes to its height, I may probably lie still and motionless as though dead, uttering neither sigh nor groan. On the other hand, the symptoms may be much more violent, and cause me to fall into fearful convulsions, cover my lips with foaming, and force from me the most piercing shrieks. This last evil you must carefully guard against; for, were my cries to be heard, it is more than probable I should be removed to another part of the prison, and we be separated for ever. When I become quite motionless, cold, and rigid as a corpse, then, and not before—you understand—force open my teeth with a chisel, pour from eight to ten drops of the liquor contained in the phial down my throat, and I may perhaps revive."

"Perhaps!" exclaimed Dantès, in grief-stricken tones.

"Help! help!" cried the abbé; "I—I—die—I——"

So sudden and violent was the fit, that the unfortunate prisoner was unable to complete the sentence begun. A violent convulsion shook his whole frame, his eyes started from their sockets, his mouth was drawn on one side, his cheeks became purple, he struggled, foamed, dashed himself about, and uttered the most dreadful cries, which, however, Dantès prevented from being heard by covering his head with the blanket. The fit lasted two hours; then, more helpless than an infant, and colder and paler

than marble, more crushed and broken than a reed trampled under foot, he stretched himself out as though in the agonies of death, and became of the ghastly hue of the tomb.

Edmond waited till life seemed extinct in the body of his friend; then, taking up the chisel, he with difficulty forced open the closely fixed jaws, carefully poured the appointed number of drops down the rigid throat, and anxiously awaited the result.

An hour passed away without the old man's giving the least sign of returning animation. Dantès began to fear he had delayed too long ere he administered the remedy, and, thrusting his hands into his hair, continued gazing on the lifeless features of his friend in an agony of despair. At length a slight colour tinged the livid cheeks, consciousness returned to the dull, open eyeballs, a faint sigh issued from the lips, and the sufferer made a feeble effort to move.

"He is saved! he is saved!" cried Dantès, in a paroxysm of delight.

The sick man was not yet able to speak, but he pointed with evident anxiety towards the door. Dantès listened, and plainly distinguished the approaching steps of the jailer. It was therefore near seven o'clock; but Edmond's anxiety had put all thoughts of time out of his head.

The young man sprang to the entrance, darted through it, carefully drawing the stone over the opening, and hurried to his cell. He had scarcely done so before the door opened, and disclosed to the jailer's inquisitorial gaze the prisoner seated as usual on the side of his bed.

Almost before the key had turned in the lock, and before the departing steps of the jailer had died away in the long corridor he had to traverse, Dantès, whose restless anxiety concerning his friend left him no desire to touch the food brought him, hurried back to the abbé's chamber, and raising the stone by pressing his head against it, was soon beside the sick man's couch.

Faria had now fully regained his consciousness, but he still lay helpless and exhausted on his miserable bed.

"I did not expect to see you again," said he feebly to Dantès.

"And why not?" asked the young man. "Did you fancy yourself dying?"

"No, I had no such idea; but, knowing that all was ready for your flight, I considered you had availed yourself of it and were gone."

The deep glow of indignation suffused the cheeks of Dantès.

"And did you really think so meanly of me," cried he, "as to believe I would depart without you?"

"At least," said the abbé, "I now see how wrong such an opinion would have been. Alas, alas! I am fearfully exhausted and debilitated by this attack."

"Be of good cheer," replied Dantès; "your strength will return:" and as he spoke he seated himself on the bed beside Faria and tenderly chafed his chilled hands. The abbé shook his head.

"The former of these fits," said he, "lasted but half an hour, at the termination of which I experienced no other feeling than a great sensation of hunger, and I rose from my bed without requiring the least help. Now I can neither move my right arm nor leg, and my head seems uncomfortable, proving a rush of blood to the brain. The next of these fits will either carry me off or leave me paralyzed for life."

"No, no!" cried Dantès. "You are mistaken—you will not die! And your third attack (if, indeed, you should have another) will find you at liberty. We shall save you another time, as we have done this, only with a better chance, because we shall be able to command every requisite assistance."

"My good Edmond," answered the abbé, "be not deceived. The attack which has just passed away condemns me for ever to the walls of a prison. None can fly from their dungeon but those who can walk."

"Well, well, perhaps just now you are not in a condition to effect your escape; but there is no hurry. We have waited so long, we can very easily defer our purpose a little longer; say a week, a month—two, if necessary. By that time you will be quite well and strong; and as it only remains with us to fix the hour and minute, we will choose the first instant that you feel able to swim to execute our project."

"I shall never swim again," replied Faria. "This arm is paralyzed—not for a time, but for ever. Lift it, and judge by its weight if I am mistaken."

The young man raised the arm, which fell back by its own weight perfectly inanimate and helpless. A sigh escaped him.

"You are convinced now, Edmond, are you not?" asked the abbé. "Depend upon it, I know what I say. Since the first attack I experienced of this malady I have continually reflected on it. Indeed, I expected it, for it is a family inheritance, both my father and grandfather having been taken off by it. The physician who prepared for me the remedy I have twice successfully taken was no other than the celebrated Cabanis; and he predicted a similar end for me."

"The physician may be mistaken!" exclaimed Dantès. "And as for your poor arm, what difference will that make in our escape? Never mind, if you cannot swim, I can take you on my shoulders and swim for both of us."

"My son," said the abbé, "you, who are a sailor and a swimmer, must know as well as I do that a man so loaded would sink ere he had advanced fifty yards in the sea. Cease, then, to allow yourself to be duped by vain hopes, that even your own excellent heart refuses to believe in. Here I shall remain till the hour of my deliverance arrives; and that, in all human probability, will be the hour of my death. As for you, who are young and active, delay not on my account, but fly—go—I give you back your promise."

"It is well," said Dantès. "And now hear my deter-

mination also." Then rising and extending his hand with an air of solemnity over the old man's head, he slowly added, "Here I swear to remain with you so long as life is spared to you, and that death only shall divide us."

Faria gazed fondly on his noble-minded friend, and read in his honest, open countenance ample confirmation of truthfulness, as well as sincere, affectionate, and faithful devotion.

"Thanks, my child," murmured the invalid, extending the one hand of which he still retained the use. "Thanks for your generous offer, which I accept as frankly as it was made." Then, after a short pause, he added: "You may one of these days reap the reward of your disinterested devotion. But as I cannot, and you will not, quit this place, it becomes necessary to fill up the excavation beneath the soldier's gallery. He might, by chance, find out the hollow sound produced by his footsteps over the excavated ground, and call the attention of his officer to the circumstance, that would bring about a discovery which would inevitably lead to our being separated. Go, then, and set about this work, in which, unhappily, I can offer you no assistance; keep at it all night if necessary, and do not return here to-morrow till after the jailer has visited me. I shall have something of the greatest importance to communicate to you."

Dantès took the hand of the abbé in his, and affectionately pressed it. Faria smiled encouragingly on him, and the young man retired to his task, filled with a religious determination faithfully and unflinchingly to discharge the vow which bound him to his afflicted friend.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TREASURE.

When Dantès returned next morning to the chamber of his companion in captivity, he found Faria seated,

and looking composed. In the ray of light which entered by the narrow window of the cell, he held open in his left hand—of which alone, it will be recollected, he retained the use—a morsel of paper, which, from being constantly rolled into a small compass, had the form of a cylinder, and was not easily kept open. He did not speak, but showed the paper to Dantès.

"What is that?" he inquired.

"Look at it," said the abbé, with a smile.

"I have looked at it with all possible attention," said Dantès, "and I only see a half-burnt paper, on which are traces of Gothic characters traced with peculiar kind of ink."

"This paper, my friend," said Faria, "I may now avow to you, since I have proved you—this paper is my treasure, of which, from this day forth, one half belongs to you."

A cold damp started to Dantès's brow. Until this day—and what a space of time!—he had avoided talking to the abbé of this treasure, the source whence accusation of madness against the poor abbé was derived. With his instinctive delicacy Edmond had preferred avoiding any touch on this painful chord, and Faria had been equally silent. He had taken the silence of the old man for a return to reason, and now these few words uttered by Faria, after so painful a crisis, seemed to announce a serious relapse of mental alienation.

"Your treasure?" stammered Dantès. Faria smiled.

"Yes," said he. "You are, indeed, a noble heart, Edmond; and I see by your paleness and your shudder what is passing in your heart at this moment. No, be assured, I am not mad. This treasure exists, Dantès, and if I have not been allowed to possess it, you will. Yes, you. No one would listen to me or believe me, because they thought me mad; but you, who must know that I am not, listen to me, and believe me afterwards if you will."

"Alas!" murmured Edmond to himself, "this is a

terrible relapse! There was only this blow wanting." Then he said aloud: "My dear friend, your attack has perhaps fatigued you; had you not better repose a while? To-morrow, if you will, I will hear your narrative; but to-day I wish to nurse you carefully. Besides," he said, "a treasure is not a thing we need hurry."

"On the contrary, it must be hurried, Edmond!" replied the old man. "Who knows if to-morrow, or the next day after, the third attack may not come on? and then must not all be finished?"

Edmond turned away his head with a sigh.

"You persist in your incredulity, Edmond," continued Faria. "My words have not convinced you. I see you require proofs. Well, then, read this paper, which I have never shown to any one."

"To-morrow, my dear friend," said Edmond, desirous of not yielding to the old man's madness. "I thought it was understood that we should not talk of that until to-morrow."

"Then we will not talk of it until to-morrow; but read this paper to-day."

"I will not irritate him," thought Edmond, and taking the paper (of which half was wanting, having been burnt, no doubt, by some accident), he read,—

"'This treasure, which may amount to two
of Roman crowns in the most distant a
of the second opening wh
declare to belong to him alo
heir.
"'25th April 149 '".

"Well?" said Faria, when the young man had finished reading it.

"Why," replied Dantès, "I see nothing but broken lines and unconnected words, which are rendered illegible by fire."

"Yes, to you, my friend, who read them for the first time; but not for me, who have grown pale over them by many nights' study, and have reconstructed every phrase, completed every thought."

"And do you believe you have discovered the concealed sense?"

"I am sure I have, and you shall judge for yourself; but first listen to the history of this paper."

"Silence!" exclaimed Dantès. "Steps approach—I go—adieu."

And Dantès, happy to escape the history and explanation which could not fail to confirm to him his friend's malady, glided like a snake along the narrow passage; whilst Faria, restored by his alarm to a kind of activity, pushed with his foot the stone into its place, and covered it with a mat in order the more effectually to avoid discovery.

It was the governor, who, hearing of Faria's accident from the jailer, had come in person to see him.

Faria sat up to receive him, and continued to conceal from the governor the paralysis that had already half stricken him with death. His fear was lest the governor, touched with pity, might order him to be removed to a prison more wholesome, and thus separate him from his young companion; but, fortunately, this was not the case, and the governor left him convinced that the poor madman, for whom in his heart he felt a kind of affection, was only affected with a slight indisposition.

During this time, Edmond, seated on his bed with his head in his hands, tried to collect his scattered thoughts. All was so rational, so grand, so logical with Faria since he had known him, that he could not understand how so much wisdom on all points could be allied to madness in any one. Was Faria deceived as to his treasure, or was all the world deceived as to Faria?

Dantès remained in his cell all day, not daring to return to his friend, thinking thus to defer the moment

when he should acquire the certainty that the abbé was mad—such a conviction would be so terrible.

But, towards the evening, after the usual visitation, Faria, not seeing the young man appear, tried to move, and get over the distance which separated them. Edmond shuddered when he heard the painful efforts which the old man made to drag himself along; his leg was inert, and he could no longer make use of one arm. Edmond was compelled to draw him towards himself, for otherwise he could not enter by the small aperture which led to Dantès's chamber.

"Here I am, pursuing you remorselessly," he said, with a benignant smile. "You thought to escape my munificence, but it is in vain. Listen to me."

Edmond saw there was no escape, and placing the old man on his bed, he seated himself on the stool beside him.

"You know," said the abbé, "that I was the secretary and intimate friend of Cardinal Spada, the last of the princes of that name. I owe to this worthy lord all the happiness I ever knew. He was not rich, although the wealth of his family had passed into a proverb, and I heard the phrase very often, 'As rich as a Spada.' But he, like public rumour, lived on this reputation for wealth; his palace was my paradise. I instructed his nephews, who are dead; and when he was alone in the world, I returned to him, by an absolute devotion to his will, all he had done for me during ten years.

"The house of the cardinal had no secrets for me. I had often seen my noble patron annotating ancient volumes, and eagerly searching amongst dusty family manuscripts. One day when I was reproaching him for his unavailing searches, and the kind of prostration of mind that followed them, he looked at me, and, smiling bitterly, opened a volume relating to the History of the City of Rome. There, in the twenty-ninth chapter of the 'Life of Pope Alexander VI.,' were the following lines, which I can never forget:—

"'The great wars of Romagne had ended; Cæsar Borgia, who had completed his conquest, had need of money to purchase all Italy. The pope had also need of money to conclude with Louis, the twelfth king of France, formidable still in spite of his recent reverses; and it was necessary, therefore, to have recourse to some profitable speculation, which was a matter of great difficulty in the impoverished condition of exhausted Italy. His holiness had an idea. He determined to make two cardinals.'

"By choosing two of the greatest personages of Rome, especially rich men—*this* was the return the holy father looked for from his speculation. In the first place, he had to sell the great appointments and splendid offices which the cardinals already held; and then he had the two hats to sell besides.

"There was a third view in the speculation, which will appear hereafter.

"The pope and Cæsar Borgia first found the two future cardinals: they were Jean Rospigliosi, who held four of the highest dignities of the holy seat; and Cæsar Spada, one of the noblest and richest of the Roman nobility. Both felt the high honour of such a favour from the pope. They were ambitious; and these found, Cæsar Borgia soon found purchasers for their appointments.

"The result was, that Rospigliosi and Spada paid for being cardinals, and eight other persons paid for the offices the cardinals held before their elevation, and thus eight hundred thousand crowns entered into the coffers of the speculators.

"It is time now to proceed to the last part of the speculation. The pope having almost smothered Rospigliosi and Spada with caresses, having bestowed upon them the insignia of cardinal, and induced them to realize their fortunes and fix themselves at Rome, the pope and Cæsar Borgia invited the two cardinals to dinner.

"This was a matter of contest between the holy father

and his son. Cæsar thought they could make use of one of the means which he always had ready for his friends—that is to say, in the first place the famous key with which they requested certain persons to go and open a particular cupboard. This key was furnished with a small iron point—a negligence on the part of the locksmith. When this was pressed to effect the opening of the cupboard, of which the lock was difficult, the person was pricked by this small point, and died next day. Then there was the ring with the lion's head, which Cæsar wore, when he meant to give certain squeezes of the hand. The lion bit the hand thus favoured, and at the end of twenty-four hours the bite was mortal.

"Cæsar then proposed to his father, either to ask the cardinals to open the cupboard, or to give each a cordial squeeze of the hand; but Alexander VI. replied to him:—

"'Whilst we are thinking of those worthy cardinals, Spada and Rospigliosi, let us ask both of them to a dinner. Something tells me that we shall regain this money. Besides, you forget, Cæsar, an indigestion declares itself immediately, whilst a prick or a bite occasions a day or two's delay.'

"Cæsar gave way before such cogent reasoning, and the cardinals were consequently invited to dinner.

"The table was laid in a vineyard belonging to the pope, near Saint-Pierre-ès-Liens, a charming retreat which the cardinals knew very well by report.

"Rospigliosi, quite giddy with his dignity, prepared his stomach, and assumed his best looks. Spada, a prudent man, and greatly attached to his only nephew, a young captain of highest promise, took paper and pen and made his will.

"He then sent to his nephew to await him in the vicinity of the vineyard; but it appeared the servant did not find him.

"Spada knew the nature of these invitations; since Christianity, so eminently civilizing, had made progress in Rome, it was no longer a centurion who came from

the tyrant with a message, 'Cæsar wills that you die,' but it was a legate *à latere*, who came with a smile on his lips to say from the pope, 'His holiness requests you will dine with him.'

"Spada set out about two o'clock to Saint-Pierre-ès-Liens. The pope awaited him. The first figure that struck the eyes of Spada was that of his nephew in full costume, and Cæsar Borgia paying him most marked attentions. Spada turned pale, as Cæsar looked at him with an ironical air, which proved that he had anticipated all, and that the snare was well spread.

"They began dinner, and Spada was only able to inquire of his nephew if he had received his message. The nephew replied no, perfectly comprehending the meaning of the question. It was too late, for he had already drunk a glass of excellent wine, placed for him expressly by the pope's butler. Spada at the same moment saw another bottle approach him, which he was pressed to taste. An hour afterwards a physician declared they were both poisoned through eating mushrooms. Spada died on the threshold of the vineyard; the nephew expired at his own door, making signs which his wife could not comprehend.

"Then Cæsar and the pope hastened to lay hands on the heritage, under pretence of seeking for the papers of the dead man. But the inheritance consisted in this only—a scrap of paper on which Spada had written:—

"'I bequeath to my beloved nephew my coffers, my books, and, amongst others my breviary with the gold corners, which I beg he will preserve in remembrance of his affectionate uncle.'

"The heirs sought everywhere, admired the breviary, laid hands on the furniture, and were greatly astonished that Spada, the rich man, was really the most miserable of uncles—no treasures, unless they were those of science comprised in the library and laboratories. This was all. Cæsar and his father searched, examined, scrutinized, but found nothing, or at least very little—not exceeding

a few thousand crowns in plate, and about the same in ready money; but the nephew had time to say to his wife before he expired,—

"'Look well among my uncle's papers; there is a will.'

"They sought even more thoroughly than the august heirs had done, but it was fruitless. There were two palaces and a vineyard behind the Palatine Hill, but in these days landed property had not much value, and the two palaces and the vineyard remained to the family as beneath the rapacity of the pope and his son.

"Months and years rolled on. Alexander VI. died poisoned—you know by what mistake. Cæsar, poisoned at the same time, escaped with colouring his skin like a snake, and assumed a new cuticle, on which the poison left spots like those we see on the skin of a tiger; then, compelled to quit Rome, he went and killed himself in obscurity in a night skirmish, scarcely noticed in history.

"After the pope's death and his son's exile, it was supposed the Spada family would again make the splendid figure they had before the cardinal's time; but this was not the case. The Spadas remained in doubtful case; a mystery hung over this dark affair, and the public rumour was that Cæsar, a better politician than his father, had carried off from the pope the fortune of the two cardinals. I say the two, because Cardinal Rospigliosi, who had not taken any precaution, was completely despoiled.

"Up to this time," said Faria, interrupting the thread of his narrative, "this seems to you very ridiculous, no doubt, eh?"

"Oh, my friend," said Dantès, "on the contrary, it seems as if I were reading a most interesting narrative; go on, I pray of you."

"I will.

"The family began to feel accustomed to this obscurity. Years rolled on, and amongst the descendants some were soldiers, others diplomatists, some churchmen, some bankers, some grew rich, and some were ruined. I come

now to the last of the family, whose secretary I was—the Comte de Spada.

"I had often heard him complain of the disproportion of his rank with his fortune; and I advised him to sink all he had in an annuity. He did so, and thus doubled his income.

"The celebrated breviary remained in the family, and was in the comte's possession. It had been handed down from father to son, for the singular clause of the only will that had been found had rendered it a real relique, preserved in the family with superstitious veneration. It was an illuminated book with beautiful Gothic characters, and so weighty with gold that a servant always carried it before the cardinal on days of great solemnity.

"At the sight of papers of all sorts—titles, contracts, parchments—which were kept in the archives of the family, all descending from the poisoned cardinal, I, like twenty servitors, stewards, secretaries before me, in my turn examined the immense bundles of documents; but in spite of the most accurate researches I found—nothing. Yet I had read, I had even written a precise history of the Borgia family, for the sole purpose of assuring myself whether any increase of fortune had occurred to them on the death of the Cardinal Cæsar Spada; but could only trace the acquisition of the property of the Cardinal Rospigliosi, his companion in misfortune.

"I was then almost assured that the inheritance had neither profited the Borgias nor the family, but had remained unpossessed like the treasures of the 'Arabian Nights' which slept in the bosom of the earth under the eyes of a genie. I searched, ransacked, counted, calculated a thousand and a thousand times the income and expenditure of the family for three hundred years. It was useless. I remained in my ignorance, and the Comte de Spada in his poverty.

"My patron died. He had reserved from his annuity his

family papers, his library composed of 5,000 volumes, and his famous breviary. All these he bequeathed to me, with a thousand Roman crowns, which he had in ready money on condition that I would have anniversary masses said for the repose of his soul, and that I would draw up a genealogical tree and history of his house. All this I did scrupulously

"Be easy, my dear Edmond, we are near the conclusion.

"In 1807, a month before I was arrested, and fifteen days after the death of Comte de Spada, on the 25th of December (you will see presently how the date became fixed in my memory), I was reading, for the thousandth time, the papers I was arranging—for the palace was sold to a stranger—and I was going to leave Rome and settle at Florence, intending to take with me twelve thousand francs I possessed, my library, and the famous breviary; when, tired with my constant labour at the same thing, and overcome by a heavy dinner I had eaten, my head dropped on my hands, and I fell asleep about three o'clock in the afternoon.

"I awoke as the clock was striking six.

"I raised my head; all was in darkness. I rang for a light; but as no one came, I determined to find one for myself. It was indeed the habit of a philosopher which I should soon be under the necessity of adopting. I took a wax-candle in one hand, and with the other groped about for a piece of paper (my match-box being empty) with which I hoped to produce a light from the small flame still playing on the embers. Fearing, however, to make use of any valuable piece of paper, I hesitated for a moment, then recollected that I had seen in the famous breviary, which was on the table beside me, an old paper quite yellow with age, and which had served as a marker for centuries, kept there by the request of the heirs. I felt for it, found it, twisted it up together, and putting it into the expiring flame, set light to it.

"But beneath my fingers as if by magic, in proportion as the fire ascended, I saw yellowish characters appear on the paper; I grasped it in my hand, put out the flame as quickly as I could, lighted my taper in the fire itself, and opened the crumpled paper with inexpressible emotion, recognizing, when I had done so, that these characters had been traced in mysterious and sympathetic ink, only appearing when exposed to the fire. Nearly one-third of the paper had been consumed by the flame. It was that paper you read this morning; read it again, Dantès, and then I will complete for you the incomplete words and unconnected sense."

Faria, with an air of triumph, offered the paper to Dantès, who this time read the following words traced with ink of a colour which most nearly resembled rust:—

"This 25th day of April, 1498, be....
Alexander VI. and fearing that not....
he may desire to become my heir, and re....
and Bentivoglio, who were poisoned....
my sole heir, that I have bu....
and has visited with me, that is in....
island of Monte-Cristo all I poss....
jewels, diamonds, gems, that I alone....
may amount to nearly two mil....
will find on raising the twentieth ro....
creek to the east in a right line. Two open....
in these caves; the treasure is in the furthest a....
which treasure I bequeath and leave en....
as my sole heir.

"25th April, 1498.

"Cæs...."

"And now," said the abbé, "read this other paper;" and he presented to Dantès a second leaf with fragments of lines written on it which Edmond read as follows:—

"....ing invited to dine by his Holiness
....content with making me pay for my hat
....serves for me the fate of Cardinals Caprara

. . . .I declare to my nephew, Guido Spada
. . . .ried in a place he know
. . . .the caves of the smal
. . . .essed of ingots, gold, money
. . . .know of the existence of this treasure, whic
. . . .lions of Roman crowns, and which h
. . . .ck from the smal
. . . .ings have been mad
. . . .ngle in the second
. . . .tire to him
AR ✝ SPADA."

Faria followed him with excited look.

"And now," he said, when he saw Dantès had rea the last line, "put the two fragments together, an judge for yourself."

Dantès obeyed, and the conjoined pieces gave th following :—

"This 25th day of April, 1498, be. . . .ing invited t dine with his holiness Alexander VI., and fearing tha not. . . .content with making me pay for my hat, h may desire to become my heir and re. . . .serves for m the fate of Cardinals Caprara and Bentivoglio, who wer poisoned, ...I declare to my nephew, Guido Spada my sole heir, that I have bu. . . .ried in a place h knows and has visited with me, ...that is, in. . . .th caves of the small island of Monte-Cristo, all I poss. . . essed of ingots, gold, money, jewels, diamonds, gems that I alone. . . .know of the existence of this treasur which may amount to nearly two mil. . . .lions of Roma crowns, and which he will find on raising the twentiet ro. . . .ck from the small creek to the east in a righ line. Two open. . . .ings have been made in thes caves ; the treasure is in the furthest a. . . .ngle in th second : which treasure I bequeath and leave en. . . tire to him as my sole heir.

"25th April, 1498.

'CÆS. . . .AR ✝ SPADA."

"Well, do you comprehend now?" inquired Faria.

"It is the declaration of Cardinal Spada, and the will so long sought for," replied Edmond, still incredulous.

"Of course; what else could it be?"

"And who completed it as it now is?"

"I did. Aided by the remaining fragment I guessed the rest; measuring the length of the lines by those of the paper, and divining the hidden meaning by means of what was in part revealed, as we are guided in a cavern by the small ray of light above us."

"And what did you do when you arrived at this conclusion?"

"I resolved to set out, and did set out, that very instant, carrying with me the beginning of my great work on forming Italy into one kingdom. But for some time the infernal police (who at this period, quite contrary to what Napoleon desired so soon as he had a son born to him, wished for a partition of provinces) had their eyes on me and my hasty departure, the cause of which they were unable to guess. Having aroused their suspicions, I was arrested at the very moment I was leaving Piombino. Now," continued Faria, addressing Dantès with an almost paternal expression—"now, my dear fellow, you know as much as I do myself. If we ever escape together, half this treasure is yours; if I die here, and you escape alone, the whole belongs to you."

"But," inquired Dantès, hesitating, "has this treasure no more legitimate possessor in this world than ourselves?"

"No, no; be easy on that score—the family is extinct, The last Comte de Spada, moreover, made me his heir; bequeathing to me this symbolic breviary, he bequeathed to me all it contained. No, no; make your mind satisfied on that point. If we lay hands on this fortune, we may enjoy it without remorse."

"And you say this treasure amounts to——"

"Two millions of Roman crowns—nearly thirteen millions of our money."

"Impossible!" said Dantès, staggered at the enormous amount.

"Impossible! and why?" asked the old man. "The Spada family was one of the oldest and most powerful families of the fifteenth century; and in these times, when all speculation and occupation were wanting, those accumulations of gold and jewels were by no means rare. There are at this day Roman families perishing of hunger, though possessed of nearly a million in diamonds and jewels, handed down as heirlooms, and which they cannot touch."

Edmond thought he was in a dream—he wavered between incredulity and joy.

"I have only kept this secret so long from you," continued Faria, "that I might prove you, and then surprise you. Had we escaped before my attack of catalepsy, I should have conducted you to Monte-Cristo; now," he added, with a sigh, "it is you who will conduct me thither. Well, Dantès, you do not thank me?"

"This treasure belongs to you, my dear friend," replied Dantès, "and to you only. I have no right to it. I am no relation of yours."

"You are my son, Dantès," exclaimed the old man. "You are the child of my captivity. My profession condemns me to celibacy. God has sent you to me to console, at one and the same time, the man who could not be a father and the prisoner who could not get free."

And Faria extended the arm of which alone the use remained to him to the young man, who threw himself around his neck and wept bitterly.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE THIRD ATTACK.

Now that this treasure, which had so long been the object of the abbé's meditations, could ensure the future happiness of him whom Faria really loved as a son, it had doubled its value in his eyes, and every day he expatiated on the amount, explaining to Dantès all the good which with thirteen or fourteen millions of francs a man could do in these days to his friends; and then Dantès's countenance became gloomy, for the oath of vengeance he had taken recurred to his memory, and he reflected how much ill in these times a man with thirteen or fourteen millions could do to his enemies.

As if fate resolved on depriving the prisoners of their last chance, and making them understand that they were condemned to perpetual imprisonment, a new misfortune befell them—the gallery on the sea side, which had long been in ruins, was rebuilt. They had repaired it completely, and stopped up with vast masses of stone the hole Dantès had partly filled in. But for this precaution, which it will be remembered the abbé had made to Edmond, the misfortune would have been still greater, for their attempt to escape would have been detected, and they would unfortunately have been separated. Thus, a fresh and even stronger door was closed upon them.

Faria, who for so long a time had kept silence as to the treasure, now perpetually talked of it. As he had said, he remained paralyzed in the right arm and the left leg, and had given up all hope of ever enjoying it himself. But he was continually thinking over some means of escape for his young companion, and he enjoyed it for him. For fear the letter might be some day lost or abstracted, he compelled Dantès to learn it by heart, and he thus knew it from one end to the other.

Then he destroyed the second portion, assured that if

the first were seized no one would be able to penetrate its real meaning. Whole hours sometimes passed whilst Faria was giving instructions to Dantès—instructions which were to serve him when he was at liberty. Then, once free, from the day and hour and moment when he was so, he could have but one only thought, which was, to gain Monte-Cristo by some means, and remain there alone under some pretext which would give no suspicions, and once there to endeavour to find the wonderful caverns, and search in the appointed spot—the appointed spot, be it remembered, being the farthest angle in the second opening.

One night Edmond awoke suddenly, believing he heard some one calling him.

He opened his eyes and tried to pierce through the gloom.

His name, or rather a plaintive voice which essayed to pronounce his name, reached him.

"Alas!" murmured Edmond, "can it be?"

He moved his bed, drew up the stone, rushed into the passage, and reached the opposite extremity; the secret entrance was open.

By the light of the wretched and wavering lamp of which we have spoken Dantès saw the old man, pale, but yet erect, clinging to the bedstead. His features were writhing with those horrible symptoms which he already knew, and which had so seriously alarmed him when he saw them for the first time.

"Alas! my dear friend," said Faria, in a resigned tone, "you understand, do you not, and I need not attempt to explain to you?"

Edmond uttered a cry of agony, and, quite out of his senses, rushed towards the door, exclaiming,—

"Help! help!"

Faria had just sufficient strength to restrain him.

"Silence," he said, "or you are lost! Think now of yourself only, my dear friend; act so as to render your captivity supportable or your flight possible. It would

require years to renew only what I have done here, and which would be instantly destroyed if our jailers knew we had communicated with each other. Besides, be assured, my dear Edmond, the dungeon I am about to leave will not long remain empty; some other unfortunate being will soon take my place, and to him you will appear like an angel of salvation. Perhaps he will be young, strong, and enduring like yourself, and will aid you in your escape, whilst I have been but a hindrance. You will no longer have half a dead body tied to you to paralyze all your movements. At length Providence has done something for you; He restores to you more than He takes away, and it was time I should die."

Edmond could only clasp his hands and exclaim,—

"Oh, my friend, my friend, speak not thus!" and then, resuming all his presence of mind—which had for a moment staggered under this blow—and his strength, which had failed at the words of the old man, he said, "Oh! I have saved you once, and I will save you a second time."

And raising the foot of the bed he drew out the phial, still a third filled with the red liquor.

"See!" he exclaimed, "there remains still some of this saving draught. Quick! quick! tell me what I must do this time. Are there any fresh instructions? Speak, my friend, I listen."

"There is not a hope," replied Faria, shaking his head. "But no matter, God wills it that man, whom He has created, and in whose heart He has so profoundly rooted the love of life, should do all in his power to preserve that existence which, however painful it may be, is yet always so dear."

"Oh, yes, yes!" exclaimed Dantès; "and I tell you you shall be saved!"

"Well, then, try. The cold gains upon me. I feel the blood flowing towards my brain. This horrible trembling, which makes my teeth chatter, and seems to dislocate my bones, begins to pervade my whole frame.

In five minutes the malady will reach its height, and in a quarter of an hour there will be nothing left of me but a corpse."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dantès, his heart wrung with anguish.

"Do as you did before, only do not wait so long. All the springs of life are now exhausted in me, and death," he continued, looking at his paralyzed arm and leg, "has but half its work to do. If, after having made me swallow twelve drops instead of ten, you see that I do not recover, then pour the rest down my throat. Now lift me on my bed, for I can no longer support myself."

Edmond took the old man in his arms, and laid him on the bed.

"And now, my dear friend," said Faria, "sole consolation of my wretched existence—you whom Heaven gave me somewhat late, but still gave me, a priceless gift, and for which I am most grateful, at the moment of separating from you for ever, I wish you all the happiness and all the prosperity you so well deserve. My son, I bless thee!"

The young man cast himself on his knees, leaning his head against the old man's bed.

"Listen now to what I say in this my dying moment. The treasure of the Spadas exists. God grants me that there no longer exists for me distance or obstacle. I see it in the depths of the inner cavern. My eyes pierce the inmost recesses of the earth, and are dazzled at the sight of so much riches. If you do escape, remember that the poor abbé, whom all the world called mad, was not so. Hasten to Monte-Cristo; avail yourself of the fortune, for you have indeed suffered long enough."

A violent shock interrupted the old man. Dantès raised his head and saw Faria's eyes injected with blood. It seemed as if a flow of blood had ascended from the chest to the head.

"Adieu! adieu!" murmured the old man, clasping Edmond's hand convulsively—"adieu!"

"Oh, no—no, not yet," he cried, "do not forsake me! Oh, succour him! Help! help! help!"

"Hush! hush!" murmured the dying man, "that they may not separate us if you save me."

"You are right. Oh, yes, yes! be assured I shall save you! Besides, although you suffer much, you do not seem in such agony as before."

"Do not mistake. I suffer less because there is in me less strength to endure it. At your age we have faith in life; it is the privilege of youth to believe and hope, but old men see death more clearly. Oh! 'tis here—'tis here—'tis over—my sight is gone—my reason escapes! Your hand, Dantès! Adieu!—adieu!" And raising himself by a final effort, in which he summoned all his faculties, he said, "Monte-Cristo! forget not Monte-Cristo!"

And he fell back in his bed.

The crisis was terrible; his twisted limbs, his swollen eyelids, a foam of blood and froth on his lips, a frame quite rigid, was soon extended on his bed of agony, in place of the intellectual being who was there but so lately.

Dantès took the lamp, placed it on a projecting stone above the bed, whence its tremulous light fell with strange and fantastic ray on this discomposed countenance and this motionless and stiffened body.

With fixed eyes he awaited boldly the moment for administering the hoped-for restorative.

When he believed the instant had arrived, he took the knife, unclosed the teeth, which offered less resistance than before, counted one after the other twelve drops, and watched; the phial contained, perhaps, twice as much more.

He waited ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, half an hour—nothing moved. Trembling, his hair erect, his brow bathed with perspiration, he counted the seconds by the beating of his heart.

Then he thought it was time to make the last trial, and he put the phial to the violet lips of Faria, and without having occasion to force open his jaws, which had remained extended, he poured the whole of the liquid down his throat.

The draught produced a galvanic effect, a violent trembling pervaded the old man's limbs, his eyes opened until it was fearful to gaze upon them, he heaved a sigh which resembled a shriek, and then all this vibrating frame returned gradually to its state of immobility, only the eyes remained open.

Half an hour, an hour, an hour and a half elapsed, and during this time of anguish Edmond leaned over his friend, his hand applied to his heart, and felt the body gradually grow cold, and the heart's pulsation become more and more deep and dull, until at length all stopped; the last movement of the heart ceased, the face became livid, the eyes remained open, but the look was glazed.

It was six o'clock in the morning; the dawn was just breaking, and its weak ray came into the dungeon and paled the ineffectual light of the lamp. Singular shadows passed over the countenance of the dead man, which at times gave it the appearance of life. Whilst this struggle between day and night lasted, Dantès still doubted; but as soon as the daylight gained the pre-eminence, he saw that he was alone with a corpse.

Then an invincible and extreme terror seized upon him, and he dared not again press the hand that hung out of bed; he dared no longer to gaze on those fixed and vacant eyes which he tried many times to close, but in vain—they opened again as soon as shut. He extinguished the lamp, carefully concealed it, and then went away, closing as well as he could the entrance to the secret passage by the large stone as he descended.

It was time, for the jailer was coming. On this occasion he began his rounds at Dantès's cell, and on leaving

him he went on to Faria's dungeon, where he was taking breakfast and some linen.

Nothing betokened that the man knew anything of what had occurred. He went on his way.

Dantès was then seized with an indescribable desire to know what was going on in the dungeon of his unfortunate friend. He therefore returned by the subterraneous gallery, and arrived in time to hear the exclamations of the turnkey, who called out for help.

Other turnkeys came, and then was heard the regular tramp of soldiers even when not on duty; behind them came the governor.

Edmond heard the noise of the bed on which they were moving the corpse, heard the voice of the governor, who desired them to throw water on the face, and seeing that in spite of this application the prisoner did not recover, sent for the doctor.

The governor then went out, and some words of pity fell on Dantès's listening ears, mingled with brutal laughter.

"Well, well!" said one, "the madman has gone to look after his treasure. Good journey to him!"

"With all his millions he will not have enough to pay for his shroud," said another.

"Oh," added a third voice, "the shrouds of the Château d'If are not dear!"

"Perhaps," said one of the previous speakers, "as he was a churchman, they may go to some expense in his behalf."

"They may give him the honours of the sack."

Edmond did not lose a word, but comprehended very little of what was said. The voices soon ceased, and it seemed to him as if the persons had all left the cell. Still he dared not enter, as they might have left some turnkey to watch the dead.

He remained, therefore, mute and motionless, restraining even his respiration.

At the end of an hour he heard a faint noise, which

increased. It was the governor, who returned, followed by the doctor and other attendants.

There was a moment's silence; it was evident that the doctor was examining the dead body.

The inquiries soon commenced.

The doctor analyzed the symptoms of the malady under which the prisoner had sunk, and declared he was dead.

Questions and answers followed in a manner that made Dantès indignant, for he felt that all the world should experience for the poor abbé the love he bore him.

"I am very sorry for what you tell me," said the governor, replying to the assurance of the doctor, "that the old man is really dead, for he was a quiet, inoffensive prisoner, happy in his folly, and required no watching."

"Ah!" added the turnkey, "there was no occasion for watching him; he would have stayed here fifty years, I'll answer for it, without any attempt to escape."

"Wasn't his name Faria?" inquired one of the officers who accompanied the governor.

"Yes, sir; and, as he said, it was an ancient name. He was, too, very learned, and rational enough on all points which did not relate to his treasure; but on that, indeed, he was obstinate."

"It is the sort of malady which we call monomania," said the doctor.

"You had never anything to complain of?" said the governor to the jailer who had charge of the abbé.

"Never, sir," replied the jailer—"never; on the contrary he sometimes amused me very much by telling me stories. One day, too, when my wife was ill, he gave me a prescription which cured her."

"Ah, ah!" said the doctor, "I was ignorant that I had a competitor; but I hope, M. le Gouverneur, that you will show him all proper respect in consequence."

"Yes, yes; make your mind easy. He shall be decently interred in the newest sack we can find. Will that satisfy you?"

"Must we do this last formality in your presence, sir?" inquired a turnkey.

"Certainly. But make haste. I cannot stay here all day."

Fresh footsteps, going and coming, were now heard, and a moment afterwards the noise of cloth being rubbed reached Dantès's ears, the bed creaked on its hinges, and the heavy foot of a man who lifts a weight resounded on the floor; then the bed again creaked under the weight deposited upon it.

"In the evening," said the governor.

"Will there be any mass?" asked one of the attendants.

"That is impossible," replied the governor. "The chaplain of the château came to me yesterday to beg for leave of absence in order to take a trip to Hyères for a week. I told him I would attend to the prisoners in his absence. If the poor abbé had not been in such a hurry he might have had his requiem."

"Pooh! pooh!" said the doctor, with the accustomed impiety of persons of his profession, "he is a churchman. God will respect his profession, and not give the devil the wicked delight of sending him a priest."

A shout of laughter followed this brutal jest.

During this time the operation of putting the body in the sack was going on.

"This evening," said the governor, when the task was ended.

"At what o'clock?" inquired a turnkey.

"Why, about ten or eleven o'clock."

"Shall we watch by the corpse?"

"Of what use would it be? Shut the dungeon as if he were alive—that is all."

Then the steps retreated, and the voices died away in the distance; the noise of the door with its creaking hinges and bolts ceased, and a silence duller than any solitude ensued, the silence of death which pervaded all, and struck its icy chill through the young man's whole

frame. Then he raised the flagstone cautiously with his head, and looked carefully round the chamber.

It was empty, and Dantès, quitting the passage, entered it.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CEMETERY OF THE CHÂTEAU D'IF.

On the bed, at full length, and faintly lighted by the pale ray that penetrated the window, was visible a sack of coarse cloth, under the large folds of which was stretched a long and stiffened form. It was Faria's last winding-sheet—a winding-sheet which, as the turnkey said, cost so little. All, then, was completed. A material separation had taken place between Dantès and his old friend. He seated himself on the edge of that terrible bed, and fell into a melancholy and gloomy reverie.

Alone! He was alone again—again relapsed into silence! He found himself once again in the presence of nothingness!

The idea of suicide, driven away by his friend, and forgotten in his presence whilst living, arose like a phantom before him in presence of his dead body.

"If I could die," he said, "I should go where he goes, and should assuredly find him again. But how to die? It is very easy," he continued with a smile of bitterness. "I will remain here, rush on the first person that opens the door, will strangle him, and then they will guillotine me."

But as it happens that in excessive griefs, as in great tempests, the abyss is found between the tops of the loftiest waves, Dantès recoiled from the idea of this infamous death, and passed suddenly from despair to an earnest desire for life and liberty.

"Die! oh, no," he exclaimed; "not die now, after having lived and suffered so long and so much! Die!

yes, had I died years since, but now it would be indeed to give way to my bitter destiny. No—I desire to live; I desire to struggle to the very last; I wish to reconquer the happiness of which I have been deprived. Before I die, I must not forget that I have my executioners to punish, and perhaps, too, who knows, some friends to reward. Yet they will forget me here, and I shall die in my dungeon like Faria."

As he said this he remained motionless, his eyes fixed like a man struck with a sudden idea, but whom this idea fills with amazement. Suddenly he rose, lifted his hand to his brow as if his brain were giddy, paced twice or thrice round his chamber, and then paused abruptly at the bed.

"Ah, ah!" he muttered, "who inspires me with this thought? Is that Thou, gracious God? Since none but the dead pass freely from this dungeon, let me assume the place of the dead!"

Without giving himself time to reconsider his decision, and, indeed, that he might not allow his thoughts to be distracted from his desperate resolution, he bent over the appalling sack, opened it with the knife which Faria had made; drew the corpse from the sack and transported it along the gallery to his own chamber, laid it on his couch, passed round its head the rag he wore at night round his own, covered it with his counterpane, once again kissed the ice-cold brow, and trying vainly to close the resisting eyes which glared horribly, turned the head towards the wall, so that the jailer might, when he brought his evening meal, believe that he was asleep, as was his frequent custom; returned along the gallery, threw the bed against the wall; returned to the other cell, took from the hiding-place the needle and thread, flung off his rags that they might feel naked flesh only beneath the coarse sackcloth, and getting inside the sack, placed himself in the posture in which the dead body had been laid, and sewed up the mouth of the sack on the inside.

The beating of his heart might have been heard, if by any mischance the jailers had entered at that moment.

Dantès might have waited until the evening visit was over, but he was afraid the governor might change his resolution, and order the dead body to be removed earlier. In that case his last hope would have been destroyed.

Now his project was settled under any circumstances, and he hoped thus to carry it into effect.

If during the time he was being conveyed the gravediggers should discover that they were conveying a live instead of a dead body, Dantès did not intend to give them time to recognize him, but with a sudden cut of the knife, he meant to open the sack from top to bottom, and profiting by their alarm, escape; if they tried to catch him he would use his knife.

If they conducted him to the cemetery and laid him in the grave, he would allow himself to be covered with earth, and then as it was night, the gravediggers could scarcely have turned their backs ere he would have worked his way through the soft soil and escape, hoping that the weight would not be too heavy for him to support.

If he was deceived in this, and the earth proved too heavy, he would be stifled, and then, so much the better, all would be over.

The first risk that Dantès ran was that the jailer, when he brought him his supper at seven o'clock, might perceive the substitution he had effected; fortunately, twenty times at least from misanthropy or fatigue, Dantès had received his jailer in bed, and then the man placed his bread and soup on the table, and went away without saying a word.

This time the jailer might not be silent as usual, but speak to Dantès, and seeing that he received no reply, go to the bed, and thus discover all.

When seven o'clock came Dantès's agony really commenced. His hand placed on his heart was unable to repress its throbbings, whilst with the other he wiped the perspiration from his temples. From time to time

shudderings ran through his whole frame, and collapsed his heart as if it were frozen. Then he thought he was going to die. Yet the hours passed on without any stir in the château, and Dantès felt he had escaped this first danger. It was a good augury. At length, about the hour the governor had appointed, footsteps were heard on the stairs. Edmond felt that the moment had arrived, and summoning up all his courage, held his breath, happy if at the same time he could have repressed in like manner the hasty pulsation of his arteries.

They stopped at the door. There were two steps, and Dantès guessed it was the two gravediggers who came to seek him. This idea was soon converted into certainty, when he heard the noise they made in putting down the hand-bier.

The door opened, and a dim light reached Dantès's eyes through the coarse sack that covered him. He saw two shadows approach his bed, a third remaining at the door with a torch in his hand. Each of these two men, approaching the ends of the bed, took the sack by its extremities.

"He's heavy, though, for an old and thin man," said one, as he raised the head.

"They say every year adds half a pound to the weight of the bones," said another, lifting the feet.

"Have you tied the knot?" inquired the first speaker.

"What would be the use of carrying so much more weight?" was the reply. "I can do that when we get there."

"Yes, you're right," replied the companion.

"What's the knot for?" thought Dantès.

They deposited the supposed corpse on the bier. Edmond stiffened himself in order to play his part of a dead man, and then the party, lighted by the man with the torch, who went first, ascended the stairs.

Suddenly he felt the fresh and sharp night air, and Dantès recognized the mistral. It was a sudden sensation, at the same time replete with delight and agony.

The bearers advanced twenty paces, then stopped, putting their bier down on the ground.

One of them went away, and Dantès heard his shoes on the pavement.

"Where am I, then?" he asked himself.

"Really, he is by no means a light load!" said the other bearer, sitting on the edge of the hand-barrow.

Dantès's first impulse was to escape, but fortunately he did not attempt it.

"Light me, you, sir," said the other bearer, "or I shall not find what I am looking for."

The man with the torch complied, although not asked in the most polite terms.

"What can he be looking for?" thought Edmond. "The spade, perhaps."

An exclamation of satisfaction indicated that the gravedigger had found the object of his search.

"Here it is at last," he said; "not without some trouble, though."

"Yes," was the answer; "but it has lost nothing by waiting."

As he said this, the man came towards Edmond, who heard a heavy and sounding substance laid down beside him, and at the same moment a cord was fastened round his feet with sudden and painful violence.

"Well, have you tied the knot?" inquired the gravedigger, who was looking on.

"Yes, and pretty tight too, I can tell you," was the answer.

"Move on, then."

And the bier was lifted once more, and they proceeded.

They advanced fifty paces farther, and then stopped to open a door, then went forward again. The noise of the waves dashing against the rocks, on which the château is built, reached Dantès's ear distinctly as they progressed.

"Bad weather!" observed one of the bearers; "not a pleasant night for a dip in the sea."

"Why, yes, the abbé runs a chance of being wet," said the other; and then there was a burst of brutal laughter.

Dantès did not comprehend the jest, but his hair stood erect on his head.

"Well, here we are at last," said one of them.

"A little farther—a little farther," said the other. "You know very well that the last was stopped on his way—dashed on the rocks—and the governor told us next day that we were careless fellows."

They ascended five or six more steps, and then Dantès felt that they took him one by the head and the other by the heels, and swung him to and fro.

"One!" said the gravediggers, "two, three, and away!"

And at the same instant Dantès felt himself flung into the air like a wounded bird falling, falling with a rapidity that made his blood curdle. Although drawn downwards by the same heavy weight which hastened his rapid descent, it seemed to him as if the time were a century. At last, with a terrific dash, he entered the ice-cold water, and as he did so he uttered a shrill cry, stifled in a moment by his immersion beneath the waves.

Dantès had been flung into the sea, into whose depths he was dragged by a thirty-six pound shot tied to his feet.

The sea is the cemetery of Château d'If.'

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ISLE OF TIBOULEN.

DANTÈS, although giddy, and almost suffocated, had yet sufficient presence of mind to hold his breath; and as his right hand (prepared as he was for every chance) held his knife open, he rapidly ripped up the sack, extricated his arm, and then his body; but in spite of all

his efforts to free himself from the bullet, he felt it dragging him down still lower. He then bent his body, and by a desperate effort severed the cord that bound his legs at the moment he was suffocating. With a vigorous spring he rose to the surface of the sea, whilst the bullet bore to its depths the sack that had so nearly become his shroud.

Dantès merely paused to breathe, and then dived again in order to avoid being seen.

When he arose a second time he was fifty paces from where he had first sunk. He saw overhead a black and tempestuous sky, over which the wind was driving the fleeting vapours that occasionally suffered a twinkling star to appear. Before him was the vast expanse of waters, sombre and terrible, whose waves foamed and roared as if before the approach of a storm.

It was necessary to strike out to sea; Ratonneau and Pomègue are the nearest isles of all those that surround the Château d'If. But Ratonneau and Pomègue are inhabited together with the islet of Daume; Tiboulen or Lemaire were the most secure. The isles of Tiboulen and Lemaire are a league from the Château d'If. Dantès, nevertheless, determined to make for them, but how could he find his way in the darkness of the night?

At this moment he saw before him, like a brilliant star, the lighthouse of Planier.

By leaving this light on the right, he kept the isle of Tiboulen a little on the left; by turning to the left, therefore, he would find it. But, as we have said, it was at least a league from the Château d'If to this island.

Often in prison Faria had said to him when he saw him idle and inactive,—

"Dantès, you must not give way to this listlessness; you will be drowned, if you seek to escape, and your strength has not been properly exercised and prepared for exertion."

These words rang in Dantès's ears even beneath the

waves. He hastened to cleave his way through them to see if he had not lost his strength. He found with pleasure that his captivity had taken away nothing of his power, and that he was still master of that element on whose bosom he had so often sported as a boy.

An hour passed during which Dantés, excited by the feeling of freedom, continued to cleave the waves.

"Let me see," said he, "I have swum above an hour; but as the wind is against me, that has retarded my speed. However, if I am not mistaken, I must be close to the Isle of Tiboulen. But what if I were mistaken?"

A shudder passed over him. He sought to tread water in order to rest himself, but the sea was too violent, and he felt that he could not make use of this means of repose.

"Well," said he, "I will swim on until I am worn out, or the cramp seizes me, and then I shall sink," and he struck out with the energy of despair.

Suddenly the sky seemed to him to become still darker and more dense, and compact clouds lowered towards him; at the same time he felt a violent pain in his knee. His imagination told him a ball had struck him, and that in a moment he would hear the report; but he heard nothing. Dantès put out his hand and felt resistance; he then extended his leg and felt the land, and in an instant guessed the nature of the object he had taken for a cloud.

Before him rose a mass of strangely formed rocks that resembled nothing so much as a vast fire petrified at the moment of its most fervent combustion. It was the Isle of Tiboulen.

Dantès rose, advanced a few steps, and with a fervent prayer of gratitude stretched himself on the granite, which seemed to him softer than down. Then, in spite of the wind and rain, he fell into the deep, sweet sleep of those worn out by fatigue.

At the expiration of an hour Edmond was awakened

by the roar of the thunder. An overhanging rock offered him a temporary shelter, and scarcely had he availed himself of it when the tempest burst forth in all its fury. Edmond felt the rock beneath which he lay tremble; the waves dashing themselves against the granite rock wetted him with their spray. In safety, as he was, he felt himself become giddy in the midst of this war of the elements and the dazzling brightness of the lightning. It seemed to him that the island trembled to its base, and that it would, like a vessel at anchor, break its moorings and bear him off into the centre of the storm.

He then recollected that he had not eaten or drunk for four-and-twenty hours. He extended his hands, and drank greedily of the rain-water that had lodged in a hollow of the rock.

As he rose, a flash of lightning, that seemed as if the whole of the heavens were opened, illumined the darkness. By its light, between the Isle of Lemaire and Cape Croisille, a quarter of a league distant, Dantès saw, like a spectre, a fishing-boat driven rapidly on by the force of the winds and waves. A second after he saw it again approaching nearer. Dantès cried at the top of his voice to warn them of their danger, but they saw it themselves. Another flash showed him four men clinging to the shattered mast and the rigging, while a fifth clung to the broken rudder.

The men he beheld saw him, doubtless, for their cries were carried to his ears by the wind. Above the splintered mast a sail rent to tatters was waving; suddenly the ropes that still held it gave way, and it disappeared in the darkness of the night like a vast sea-bird. At the same moment a violent crash was heard, and cries of distress. Perched on the summit of the rock, Dantès saw by the lightning the vessel in pieces; and amongst the fragments were visible the agonized features of the unhappy sailors. Then all became dark again.

Dantès ran down the rocks at the risk of being himself dashed to pieces. He listened, he strove to examine,

but he heard and saw nothing; all human cries had ceased, and the tempest alone continued to rage.

By degrees the wind abated; vast gray clouds rolled towards the west, and the blue firmament appeared studded with bright stars. Soon a red streak became visible on the horizon; the waves whitened, a light played over them and gilded their foaming crests with gold. It was day.

Dantès stood silent and motionless before this grand spectacle, for since his captivity he had forgotten it. He turned towards the fortress, and looked both at the sea and the land.

The gloomy building rose from the bosom of the ocean with that imposing majesty of inanimate objects that seems at once to watch and to command.

It was about five o'clock. The sea continued to grow calmer.

"In two or three hours," thought Dantès, "the turnkey will enter my chamber, find the body of my poor friend, recognize it, seek for me in vain, and give the alarm. Then the passage will be discovered; the men who cast me into the sea, and who must have heard the cry I uttered, will be questioned. Then boats filled with armed soldiers will pursue the wretched fugitive. The cannon will warn every one to refuse shelter to a man wandering about naked and famished. The police of Marseilles will be on the alert by land whilst the governor pursues me by sea. I am cold, I am hungry. I have lost even the knife that saved me. Oh, my God! I have suffered enough surely; have pity on me, and do for me what I am unable to do for myself."

As Dantès (his eyes turned in the direction of the Château d'If) uttered this prayer, he saw appear at the extremity of the Isle of Pomègue, like a bird skimming over the sea, a small bark that the eye of a sailor alone could recognize as a Genoese tartane. She was coming out of Marseilles harbour, and was standing out to sea rapidly, her sharp prow cleaving through the waves.

"Oh!" cried Edmond, "to think that in half an hour I could join her, did I not fear being questioned, detected, and conveyed back to Marseilles. What can I do? What story can I invent?"

As he spoke, Dantès looked towards the spot where the fishing vessel had been wrecked, and started. The red cap of one of the sailors hung to a point of the rock, and some beams that had formed a part of the vessel's keel floated at the foot of the crags.

In an instant Dantès's plan was formed. He swam to the cap, placed it on his head, seized one of the beams, and struck out so as to cross the line the vessel was taking.

"I am saved," murmured he.

And this conviction restored his strength.

He soon perceived the vessel, which, having the wind right ahead, was tacking between the Château d'If and the tower of Planier. For an instant he feared lest the bark, instead of keeping inshore, should stand out to sea; but he soon saw by her manœuvres that she wished to pass, like most vessels bound for Italy, between the islands of Jaros and Calaseraigne. However, the vessel and the swimmer insensibly neared one another; and in one of its tacks the bark approached within a quarter of a mile of him. He rose on the waves, making signs of distress; but no one on board perceived him, and the vessel stood on another tack. Dantès would have cried out, but he reflected that the wind would drown his voice.

Dantès, although almost sure as to what course the bark would take, had yet watched it anxiously until it tacked and stood towards him. Then he advanced; but, before they had met, the vessel again changed her direction. By a violent effort he rose half out of the water, waving his cap, and uttering a loud shout peculiar to sailors.

This time he was both seen and heard, and the tartane instantly steered towards him. At the same time, he saw they were about to lower the boat.

An instant after, the boat, rowed by two men, ad-

vanced rapidly towards him. Dantès abandoned the beam, which he thought now useless, and swam vigorously to meet them. But he had reckoned too much upon his strength, and then he felt how serviceable the beam had been to him. His arms grew stiff, his legs had lost their flexibility, and he was almost breathless.

He uttered a second cry. The two sailors redoubled their efforts, and one of them cried in Italian, "Courage."

The word reached his ear as a wave, which he no longer had the strength to surmount, passed over his head. He rose again to the surface, supporting himself by one of those desperate efforts a drowning man makes, uttered a third cry, and felt himself sink again, as if the fatal bullet were again tied to his feet.

The water passed over his head and the sky seemed livid. A violent effort again brought him to the surface. He felt as if something seized him by the hair; but he saw and heard nothing. He had fainted.

When he opened his eyes Dantès found himself on the deck of the tartane. His first care was to see what direction they were pursuing. They were rapidly leaving the Château d'If behind. Dantès was so exhausted that the exclamation of joy he uttered was mistaken for a sigh.

As we have said, he was lying on the deck. A sailor was rubbing his limbs with a woollen cloth; another, whom he recognized as the one who had cried out "courage," held a gourd full of rum to his mouth; whilst the third, an old sailor, at once the pilot and captain, looked on with that egotistical pity men feel for a misfortune that they have escaped yesterday and which may overtake them to-morrow.

A few drops of the rum restored suspended animation, whilst the friction of his limbs restored their elasticity.

"Who are you?" said the pilot in bad French.

"I am," replied Dantès, in bad Italian, "a Maltese sailor. We were coming from Syracuse laden with grain. The storm of last night overtook us at Cape Morgion, and we were wrecked on these rocks."

"Where do you come from?"

"From these rocks, that I had the good luck to cling to whilst our captain and the rest of the crew were all lost. I saw your ship, and fearful of being left to perish on the desolate island, I swam off on a fragment of the vessel in order to try and gain your bark. You have saved my life, and I thank you," continued Dantès. "I was lost when one of your sailors caught hold of my hair."

"It was I," said a sailor, of a frank and manly appearance; "and it was time, for you were sinking."

"Yes," returned Dantès, holding out his hand. "I thank you again."

"I almost hesitated, though," replied the sailor, "you looked more like a brigand than an honest man, with your beard six inches and your hair a foot long."

Dantès recollected that his hair and beard had not been cut all the time he was at the Château d'If.

"Yes," said he, "I made a vow to our Lady of the Grotto not to cut my hair or beard for ten years if I were saved in a moment of danger; but to-day the vow expires."

"Now what are we to do with you?" said the captain.

"Alas! anything you please. My captain is dead. I have barely escaped, but I am a good sailor. Leave me at the first port you make. I shall be sure to find employment."

"Do you know the Mediterranean?"

"I have sailed over it since my childhood."

"You know the best harbours?"

"There are few ports that I could not enter or leave with my eyes blindfolded."

"I say, captain," said the sailor who had cried "courage!" to Dantès, "if what he says is true, what hinders his staying with us?"

"If he says true," said the captain doubtingly. "But in his present condition he will promise anything, and take his chance of keeping it afterwards."

"I will do more than I promise," said Dantès.

"We shall see," returned the other, smiling.

"Where are you going to?" asked Dantès.

"To Leghorn."

"Then why, instead of tacking so frequently, do you not sail nearer the wind?"

"Because we should run straight on to the island of Rion."

"You shall pass it by twenty fathoms."

"Take the helm, and let us see what you know."

The young man took the helm, ascertaining by a slight pressure if the vessel answered the rudder, and seeing that, without being a first-rate sailor, she yet was tolerably obedient, "To the braces," said he.

The four seamen, who composed the crew, obeyed, whilst the pilot looked on.

"Haul taut."

They obeyed.

"Belay."

This order was also executed, and the vessel passed, as Dantès had predicted, twenty fathoms to the right.

"Bravo!" said the captain.

"Bravo!" repeated the sailors.

And they all regarded with astonishment this man whose eye had recovered an intelligence, and his body a vigour they were far from suspecting.

"You see," said Dantès, quitting the helm, "I shall be of some use to you at least during the voyage. If you do not want me at Leghorn, you can leave me there, and I will pay you out of the first wages I get for my food and the clothes you lend me."

"Ah," said the captain, "we can agree very well, if you are reasonable."

"Give me what you give the others, and all will be arranged," returned Dantès.

"That's not fair," said the seaman who had saved Dantès. "For you know more than we do."

"What is that to you, Jacopo?" returned the captain. "Every one is free to ask what he pleases."

"That's true," replied Jacopo. "I only made a remark."

"Well, you would do much better to lend him a jacket and a pair of trousers, if you have them."

"No," said Jacopo; "but I have a shirt and a pair of trousers."

"That is all I want," interrupted Dantès.

Jacopo dived into the hold, and soon returned with what Edmond wanted.

"Now, then, do you wish for anything else?" said the master.

"A piece of bread and another glass of the capital rum I tasted, for I have not eaten or drunk for a long time."

He had not tasted food for forty hours.

A piece of bread was brought, and Jacopo offered him the gourd.

"Larboard your helm," cried the captain to the steersman.

Dantès glanced at the same side as he lifted the gourd to his mouth, but his hand stopped.

"Halloa, what's the matter at the Château d'If?" said the captain.

A small white cloud, which had attracted Dantès's attention, crowned the summit of the bastion of the Château d'If.

At the same moment the faint report of a gun was heard. The sailors looked at one another.

"What is this?" asked the captain.

"A prisoner has escaped from the Château d'If, and they are firing the alarm gun," replied Dantès.

The captain glanced at him, but he had lifted the rum to his lips, and was drinking it with so much composure that his suspicions, if he had any, died away.

"At any rate," murmured he, "if it be, so much the better, for I have made a rare acquisition."

Under pretence of being fatigued, Dantès asked to take the helm; the steersman, enchanted to be relieved, looked at the captain, and the latter by a sign indicated

that he might abandon it to his new comrade. Dantès could thus keep his eyes on Marseilles.

"What is the day of the month?" asked he of Jacopo, who sat down beside him.

"The 28th of February."

"In what year?"

"In what year—you ask me in what year?"

"Yes," replied the young man, "I ask you in what year!"

"You have forgotten then?"

"I have been so frightened last night," replied Dantès, smiling, "that I have almost lost my memory. I ask you what year is it?"

"The year 1829," returned Jacopo.

It was fourteen years day for day since Dantès's arrest.

He was nineteen when he entered the Château d'If; he was thirty-three when he escaped.

A sorrowful smile passed over his face; he asked himself what had become of Mercédès, who must believe him dead.

Then his eyes lighted up with hatred as he thought of the three men who had caused him so long and wretched a captivity.

He renewed against Danglars, Fernand, and Villefort the oath of implacable vengeance he had made in his dungeon.

This oath was no longer a vain menace, for the fastest sailer in the Mediterranean would have been unable to overtake the little tartane, that with every stitch of canvas set was flying before the wind to Leghorn.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SMUGGLERS.

DANTÈS had not been a day on board before he had an insight into the persons with whom he sailed. Without

having been in the school of the Abbé Faria, the worthy master of *La Jeune Amélie* (the name of the Genoese tartane) knew a smattering of all the tongues spoken on the shores of that large lake called the Mediterranean, from the Arabic to the Provençal. The Genoese, subtle as he was, was duped by Edmond, in whose favour his mild demeanour, his nautical skill, and his admirable dissimulation pleaded. Moreover, it is possible that the Genoese was one of those shrewd persons who know nothing but what they should know, and believe nothing but what they should believe.

It was thus, in this reciprocal position, that they reached Leghorn.

Here Edmond was to undergo another trial; it was to see if he could recognize himself, never having beheld his own features for fourteen years. He had preserved a tolerably good remembrance of what the youth had been, and was now to find what the man had become. His comrades believed that his vow was fulfilled. As he had twenty times touched at Leghorn before, he remembered a barber in the Rue Saint-Ferdinand. He went there to have his beard and hair cut.

When the operation was concluded, when Edmond felt his chin was completely smooth and his hair reduced to its usual length, he requested a looking-glass in which he might see himself. He was now, as we have said, three-and-thirty years of age, and his fourteen years' imprisonment had produced a great moral change in his appearance.

Dantès had entered the Château d'If with the round, open, smiling face of a young and happy man with whom the early paths of life have been smooth, and who relies on the future as a natural deduction from the past. This was now all changed.

His oval face was lengthened, his smiling mouth had assumed the firm and marked lines which betoken resolution; his eyebrows were arched beneath a large and thoughtful wrinkle; his eyes were full of melancholy,

and from their depths occasionally sparkled gloomy fires of misanthropy and hatred; his complexion, so long kept from the sun, had now that pale colour which produces, when the features are encircled with black hair, the aristocratic beauty of the men of the north; the deep learning he had acquired had besides diffused over his features the rays of extreme intellect; and he had also acquired, although previously a tall man, that vigour which a frame possesses which has so long concentrated all its force within itself.

Edmond smiled when he beheld himself. It was impossible that his best friend—if, indeed, he had any friend left—could recognize him; he could not recognize himself.

Attracted by his prepossessing appearance, the master of *La Jeune Amélie* renewed his offer of an engagement to Dantès; but Dantès, who had his own projects, would not agree for a longer time than three months.

La Jeune Amélie had a very active crew, very obedient to their captain, who lost as little time as possible. He had scarcely been a week at Leghorn before the hold of his vessel was filled with painted muslins, prohibited cottons, English powder, and tobacco on which the crown had forgotten to put its mark. The master was to get all this out of Leghorn free of duties and land it on the shores of Corsica, where certain speculators undertook to forward the cargo to France.

They sailed; Edmond was again cleaving the azure sea which had been the first horizon of his youth, and which he had so often dreamed of in prison. He left Gorgone on his right and La Pianosa on his left, and went towards the country of Paoli and Napoleon.

The next morning, going on deck, which he always did at an early hour, the master found Dantès leaning against the bulwarks gazing with intense earnestness at a pile of granite rocks, which the rising sun tinged with rosy light. It was the Isle of Monte-Cristo.

La Jeune Amélie left it three-quarters of a league to the larboard, and kept on for Corsica.

Dantès thought, as they passed thus closely the island whose name was so interesting to him, that he had only to leap into the sea and in half an hour he would be on the promised land. But, then, what could he do without instruments to discover his treasure, without arms to defend himself? Besides, what would the sailors say? What would the master think? He must wait.

Fortunately Dantès had learned how to wait; he had waited fourteen years for his liberty, and now he was free he could wait at least six months or a year for wealth.

The evening came on, and Edmond saw the island covered with every tint that twilight brings with it, and disappear in the darkness from all eyes; but he, with his gaze accustomed to the gloom of a prison, continued to see it after all the others, for he remained last upon deck.

The next morn broke off the coast of Aleria; all day they coasted, and in the evening saw fires lighted on land. When they were extinguished, they no doubt recognized the signals for landing, for a ship's lantern was hung up at the masthead instead of the streamer, and they neared the shore within gunshot.

Dantès remarked that at this time, too, the master of *La Jeune Amélie* had, as he neared the land, mounted two small culverines, which, without making much noise, can throw a ball, of four to the pound, a thousand paces or so.

But on this occasion the precaution was superfluous, and everything proceeded with the utmost smoothness and politeness. Four shallops came off with very little noise alongside the bark, which, no doubt, in acknowledgment of the compliment, lowered her own shallop into the sea, and the five boats worked so well that by two o'clock in the morning all the cargo was out of *La Jeune Amélie* and on *terra firma*.

The same night, such a man of regularity was the master of *La Jeune Amélie* that the profits were shared out, and each man had a hundred Tuscan livres, or about three guineas English.

But the voyage was not ended. They turned the bowsprit towards Sardinia, where they intended to take in a cargo which was to replace what had been discharged.

The second operation was as successful as the first; *La Jeune Amélie* was in luck.

This new cargo was destined for the coast of the duchy of Lucca, and consisted almost entirely of Havana cigars, sherry, and Malaga wines.

There they had a bit of a skirmish in getting rid of the duties; the *gabelle* was, in truth, the everlasting enemy of the master of *La Jeune Amélie*. A custom-house officer was laid low, and two sailors were wounded. Dantès was one of the latter, a ball having touched him in the left shoulder.

Dantès was almost glad of this affray, and almost pleased at being wounded, for they were rude lessons which taught him with what eye he could view danger, and with what endurance he could bear suffering. He had contemplated danger with a smile, and when wounded had exclaimed with the great philosopher, "Pain, thou art not an evil."

He had, moreover, looked upon the custom-house officer wounded to death; and, whether from heat of blood produced by the rencontre or the chill of human sentiment, this sight had made but slight impression upon him; Dantès was on the way he desired to follow, and was moving towards the end he wished to achieve. His heart was in a fair way of petrifying in his bosom. Jacopo, seeing him fall, had believed him killed, and rushing towards him, raised him up, and then attended to him with all the kindness of an attached comrade.

Fortunately, as we have said, Edmond was only wounded, and with certain herbs gathered at certain seasons and sold to the smugglers by the old Sardinian women, the wound soon closed. Edmond then resolved to try Jacopo, and offered him in return for his attention a share of his prize-money, but Jacopo refused it indignantly.

It resulted, therefore, from this kind of sympathetic devotion which Jacopo had bestowed on Edmond from the first time he saw him, that Edmond felt for Jacopo a certain degree of affection. But this sufficed for Jacopo, who already instinctively felt that Edmond had a right to superiority of position—a superiority which Edmond had concealed from all others. And from this time the kindness which Edmond showed him was enough for the brave seaman.

Two months and a half elapsed in these trips, and Edmond had become as skilful a coaster as he had been a hardy seaman; he had formed an acquaintance with all the smugglers on the coast, and learned all the masonic signs by which these half pirates recognize each other. He had passed and repassed his Isle of Monte-Cristo twenty times, but not once had he found an opportunity of landing there.

He then formed a resolution. This was, as soon as his engagement with the master of *La Jeune Amélie* ended, he would hire a small bark on his own account (for in his several voyages he had amassed a hundred piastres), and under some pretext land at the Isle of Monte-Cristo.

Prison had made Edmond prudent, and he was desirous of running no risk whatever.

But in vain did he rack his imagination; fertile as it was, he could not devise any plan for reaching the wished-for isle without being accompanied thither.

Dantès was tossed about on these doubts and wishes, when the master, who had great confidence in him, and was very desirous of retaining him in his service, took him by the arm one evening and led him to a tavern on the Via del' Oglio, where the leading smugglers of Leghorn used to congregate.

It was here they discussed the affairs of the coast. Already Dantès had visited this maritime bourse two or three times, and seeing all these hardy free-traders who supplied the whole coast for nearly two hundred leagues, he had asked himself what power might not

that man attain who should give the impulse of his will to all these contrary and diverging links.

This time it was a great matter that was under discussion, connected with a vessel laden with Turkey carpets, stuffs of the Levant, and cashmeres. It was requisite to find some neutral ground on which an exchange could be made, and then to try and land these goods on the coast of France.

If successful the profit would be enormous ; there would be a gain of fifty or sixty piastres each for the crew.

The master of *La Jeune Amélie* proposed as a place of landing the Isle of Monte-Cristo, which, being completely deserted, and having neither soldiers nor revenue officers, seemed to have been placed in the midst of the ocean since the time of the heathen Olympus by Mercury, the god of merchants and robbers—classes which we in modern times have separated if not made distinct, but which antiquity appears to have included in the same category.

At the mention of Monte-Cristo Dantès started with joy. He rose to conceal his emotion, and took a turn round the smoky tavern, where all the languages of the known world were jumbled in a *lingua franca*. When he again joined the two persons who had been discussing, it had been decided that they should touch at Monte-Cristo, and set out on the following night.

Edmond, being consulted, was of opinion that the island offered every possible security, and that great enterprises to be well done should be done quickly. Nothing, then, was altered in the plan arranged, and orders were given to get under way next night, and, wind and weather permitting, to gain the day after the waters of the neutral isle.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ISLE OF MONTE-CRISTO.

THE night was one of the most feverish that Dantès had ever passed, and during its progress all the chances of good and evil passed through his brain. If he closed his eyes, he saw the letters of Cardinal Spada written on the wall in characters of flame; if he slept for a moment, the wildest dreams haunted his brain. He descended into grottos paved with emeralds, with panels of rubies, and the roof glowing with diamond stalactites. Pearls fell drop by drop, as subterranean waters filter in their caves. Edmond, amazed, wonderstruck, filled his pockets with the radiant gems and then returned to daylight, when he discovered that his prizes were all converted into common pebbles. He then endeavoured to re-enter these marvellous grottos, but then beheld them only in the distance; and now the way serpentined into countless paths, and then the entrance became invisible, and in vain did he tax his memory for the magic and mysterious word which opened the splendid caverns of Ali Baba to the Arabian fisherman. All was useless; the treasure disappeared, and had again reverted to the genii from whom for a moment he had hoped to carry it off.

The day came at length, and was almost as feverish as the night had been; but it brought reason to aid his imagination, and Dantès was then enabled to arrange a plan which had hitherto been vague and unsettled in his brain.

Night came, and with it the preparation for departure, and these preparations served to conceal Dantès's agitation. He had by degrees assumed such authority over his companions that he was almost like a commander on board; and as his orders were always clear, distinct,

and easy of execution, his comrades obeyed him with celerity and pleasure.

At seven o'clock in the evening all was ready, and at ten minutes past seven they doubled the lighthouse just as the beacon was kindled.

The sea was calm, and with a fresh breeze from the south-east they sailed beneath a bright blue sky, in which God also lighted up in turn His beacon lights, each of which is a world. Dantès told them that all hands might turn in and he would take the helm.

When the Maltese (for so they called Dantès) had said this it was sufficient, and all went to their cots contentedly. This frequently happened. Dantès, rejected by all the world, frequently experienced a desire for solitude, and what solitude is more complete, more poetical, than that of a bark floating isolated on the sea during the obscurity of the night, in the silence of immensity and under the eye of Heaven ?

Now this solitude was peopled with his thoughts, the night lighted up by his illusions, and the silence animated by his anticipations. When the master awoke, the vessel was hurrying on with every sail set, and every sail full with the breeze. They were making nearly ten knots an hour.

The Isle of Monte-Cristo loomed large on the horizon.

About five o'clock in the evening the island was quite distinct, and everything on it was plainly perceptible, owing to that clearness of the atmosphere which is peculiar to the light which the rays of the sun cast at its setting.

Edmond gazed most earnestly at the mass of rocks which gave out all the variety of twilight colours from the brightest pink to the deepest blue, and from time to time his cheeks flushed, his brow became purple, and a mist passed over his eyes.

Never did gamester, whose whole fortune is staked on one cast of the die, experience the anguish which Edmond

felt in his paroxysms of hope. Night came, and at ten o'clock p.m. they anchored. *La Jeune Amélie* was the first at the rendezvous.

In spite of his usual command over himself, Dantès could not restrain his impetuosity. He was the first who jumped on shore, and had he dared he would, like Lucius Brutus, have "kissed his mother earth." It was dark, but at eleven o'clock the moon rose in the midst of the ocean, whose every wave she silvered, and then, "ascending high," played in floods of pale light on the rocky hills of this second Pelion.

The island was familiar to the crew of *La Jeune Amélie;* it was one of her halting-places. As to Dantès, he had passed it on his voyages to and from the Levant, but never touched at it.

He questioned Jacopo. "Where shall we pass the night?" he inquired.

"Why, on board the tartane," replied the sailor.

"Should we not be better in the grottos?"

"What grottos?"

"Why, the grottos—caves of the island."

"I do not know of any grottos," replied Jacopo.

A cold damp sprang to Dantès's brow.

"What! are there no grottos at Monte-Cristo?" he asked.

"None."

For a moment Dantès was speechless; then he remembered that these caves might have been filled up by some accident, or even stopped up for the sake of greater security by Cardinal Spada.

The point was then to discover the lost opening. It was useless to search at night, and Dantès therefore delayed all investigation until the morning. Besides, a signal made half a league out at sea, and to which *La Jeune Amélie* replied by a similar signal, indicated that the moment was arrived for business.

The boat that now arrived, assured by the answering signal that all was right, soon came in sight, white and

silent as a phantom, and cast anchor within a cable's length of shore.

No one had the slightest suspicion; and when next day, taking a fowling-piece, powder, and shot, Dantès testified a desire to go and kill some of the wild goats that were seen springing from rock to rock, his wish was construed into a love of sport or a desire for solitude. However, Jacopo insisted on following him, and Dantès did not oppose this, fearing if he did so that he might incur distrust. Scarcely, however, had he gone a quarter of a league, than having killed a kid, he begged Jacopo to take it to his comrades and request them to cook it, and when ready to let him know by firing a gun. This and some dried fruits and a flask of the wine of Monte Pulciano was the bill of fare.

Dantès went forwards, looking behind and round about him from time to time. Having reached the summit of a rock, he saw, a thousand feet beneath him, his companions, whom Jacopo had rejoined, and who were all busy preparing the repast which Edmond's skill as a marksman had augmented with a capital dish.

Edmond looked at them for a moment with the sad and soft smile of a man superior to his fellows.

Meanwhile, by a way between two walls of rock, following a path worn by a torrent, and which, in all probability, human foot had never before trod, Dantès approached the spot where he supposed the grottos must have existed. Keeping along the coast, and examining the smallest objects with serious attention, he thought he could trace on certain rocks marks made by the hand of man.

It seemed, however, to Edmond, who was hidden from his comrades by the inequalities of the ground, that at sixty paces from the harbour the marks ceased, nor did they terminate at any grotto. A large round rock, placed solidly on its base, was the only spot to which they seemed to lead. Edmond reflected that perhaps instead of having reached the end he might only have touched

on the beginning, and he therefore turned round and retraced his steps.

During this time his comrades had prepared the repast, had got some water from a spring, spread out the fruit and bread, and cooked the kid. Just at the moment when they were taking the dainty animal from the spit they saw Edmond, who, light and daring as a chamois, was springing from rock to rock, and they fired the signal agreed upon. The sportsman instantly changed his direction and ran quickly towards them. But at the moment when they were all following with their eyes his agile bounds whose rashness gave them alarm, Edmond's foot slipped, and they saw him stagger on the edge of a rock and disappear. They all rushed towards him, for all loved Edmond in spite of his superiority, yet Jacopo reached him first.

He found Edmond stretched bleeding and almost senseless. He had rolled down a height of twelve or fifteen feet. They poured some drops of rum down his throat, and this remedy, which had before been so beneficial to him, produced the same effect as formerly. Edmond opened his eyes, complained of great pain in his knee, a feeling of heaviness in his head, and severe pains in his loins. They wished to carry him to the shore, but when they touched him, although under Jacopo's directions, he declared, with heavy groans, that he could not bear to be moved.

It may be supposed that Dantès did not think of his dinner; but he insisted that his comrades, who had not his reasons for fasting, should have their meal. As for himself, he declared that he had only need of a little rest, and that when they returned he should be easier. The sailors did not require much urging. They were hungry, and the smell of the roasted kid was very savoury, and your tars are not very ceremonious. An hour afterwards they returned. All that Edmond had been able to do was to drag himself about a dozen paces forward to lean against a moss-grown rock.

But, far from being easier, Dantès's pains appeared to increase in violence. The old master, who was obliged to sail in the morning in order to land his cargo on the frontiers of Piedmont and France, between Nice and Fréjus, urged Dantès to try and rise. Edmond made great exertions in order to comply; but at each effort he fell back, moaning and turning pale.

"He has broken his ribs," said the commander in a low voice. "No matter; he is an excellent fellow, and we must not leave him. We will try and carry him on board the tartane."

Dantès declared, however, that he would rather die where he was than undergo the agony caused by the slightest movement he made.

"Well," said the master, "let what may happen, it shall never be said that we deserted a good comrade like you. We will not go till evening."

Dantès would not allow that any such infraction of regular and proper rules should be made in his favour.

"No, no," he said to the master; "I was awkward, and it is just that I pay the penalty of my clumsiness. Leave me a small supply of biscuit, a gun, powder, and balls, to kill the kids or defend myself at need, and a pickaxe, to build something like a shed if you delay in coming back for me."

"But you'll die of hunger," said the master.

"I would rather do so," was Edmond's reply, "than suffer the inexpressible agonies which the slightest motion brings on."

The master turned towards his vessel, which was undulating in the small harbour, and, with her sails partly set, was ready for sea when all her toilet should be completed.

"What are we to do, Maltese?" asked the captain. "We cannot leave you here so, and yet we cannot stay."

"Go, go!" exclaimed Dantès.

"We shall be absent at least a week," said the master,

" and then we must run out of our course to come here and take you up again."

" Why," said Dantès, " if in two or three days you hail any fishing-boat, desire them to come here to me. I will pay twenty-five piastres for my passage back to Leghorn. If you do not come across one, return for me."

The master shook his head.

" Listen, Captain Baldi; there's one way of settling this," said Jacopo. " Do you go, and I will stay and take care of the wounded man."

" And give up your share of the venture," said Edmond, " to remain with me? "

" Yes," said Jacopo, " and without any hesitation."

" You are a good fellow and a kind-hearted messmate," replied Edmond, " and Heaven will recompense you for your generous intentions; but I do not wish any one to stay with me. A day or two's rest will set me up, and I hope I shall find amongst the rocks certain herbs most excellent for contusions."

A singular smile passed over Dantès's lips. He squeezed Jacopo's hand warmly; but nothing could shake his determination to remain—and remain alone.

The smugglers left with Edmond what he had requested, and set sail; but not without turning about several times, and each time making signs of a cordial leave-taking, to which Edmond replied with his hand only, as if he could not move the rest of his body.

Then, when they had disappeared, he dragged himself cautiously to the top of a rock, from which he had a full view of the sea, and thence he saw the tartane complete her preparations for sailing, weigh anchor, and, balancing herself as gracefully as a water-fowl ere it takes to the wing, set sail. At the end of an hour she was completely out of sight.

Then Dantès rose more agile and light than the kid amongst the myrtles and shrubs of these wild rocks, took his gun in one hand, his pickaxe in the other, and

hastened towards the rock on which the marks he had noted terminated.

"And now," he exclaimed, remembering the tale of the Arabian fisherman, which Faria had related to him, "now, open sesame!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SECRET CAVE.

DANTÈS, as we have said, had traced back the marks in the rock, and he had noticed that they led to a small creek, hidden like the bath of some ancient nymph. This creek was sufficiently wide at its mouth, and deep in the centre, to admit of the entrance of a small vessel of the speronare class, which would be perfectly concealed from observation.

Then, following the clue that, in the hands of the Abbé Faria, had been so skilfully used to guide him through the Dædalian labyrinth of probabilities, he thought that Cardinal Spada, anxious not to be watched, had entered the creek, concealed his little bark, followed the line marked by the notches in the rock, and at the end of it had buried his treasure. It was this idea that had brought Dantès back to the circular rock. One thing only perplexed Edmond, and destroyed his theory. How could this rock, which weighed several tons, have been lifted to this spot without the aid of many men? Suddenly an idea flashed across his mind. Instead of raising it, thought he, they have lowered it. And he sprang from the rock in order to inspect the base on which it had formerly stood.

He soon perceived that a slope had been formed, and the rock had slid along this until it stopped at the spot it now occupied. A large stone had served as a wedge; flints and pebbles had been inserted round it,

so as to conceal the orifice; this species of masonry had been covered with earth, and grass and weeds had grown there; moss had clung to the stones, and myrtle bushes had taken root, and the old rock seemed fixed to the earth.

Dantès raised the earth carefully, and detected, or fancied he detected, the ingenious artifice. He attacked this wall, cemented by the hand of Time, with his pickaxe. After ten minutes' labour the wall gave way, and a hole large enough to insert the arm was opened. Dantès went and cut the strongest olive tree he could find, stripped off its branches, inserted it in the hole, and used it as a lever. But the rock was too heavy and too firmly wedged to be moved by any one man, were he Hercules himself. Dantès reflected that he must attack this wedge. But how? He cast his eyes around, and saw the horn full of powder which his friend Jacopo had left him. He smiled; the invention would serve him for this purpose. With the aid of his pickaxe Dantès dug between the upper rock and the one that supported it a mine similar to those formed by pioneers when they wish to spare human labour, filled it with powder, then made a match by rolling his handkerchief in saltpetre. He lighted it and retired.

The explosion was instantaneous; the upper rock was lifted from its base by the terrific force of the powder; the lower one flew into pieces; thousands of insects escaped from the aperture Dantès had previously formed, and a huge snake, like the guardian demon of the treasure, rolled himself along with a sinuous motion and disappeared.

Dantès approached the upper rock, which now, without any support, leant towards the sea. The intrepid treasure-seeker walked round it, and selecting the spot from whence it appeared most easy to attack it, placed his lever in one of the crevices and strained every nerve to move the mass.

The rock, already shaken by the explosion, tottered on

its base. Dantès redoubled his efforts. He seemed like one of the ancient Titans who uprooted the mountains to hurl against the father of the gods. The rock yielded, rolled, bounded, and finally disappeared in the ocean.

On the spot it had occupied was visible a circular place, which exposed an iron ring let into a square flagstone. Dantès uttered a cry of joy and surprise. Never had a first attempt been crowned with more perfect success. He would fain have continued, but his knees trembled, his heart beat so violently, and his eyes became so dim that he was forced to pause. This feeling lasted but for a moment. Edmond inserted his lever in the ring, and exerting all his strength, the flagstone yielded, and disclosed a kind of stair that descended until it was lost in the obscurity of a subterraneous grotto. Any one else would have rushed on with a cry of joy. Dantès turned pale, hesitated, and reflected.

"Come," said he to himself, "be a man. I am accustomed to adversity. I must not be cast down by the discovery that I have been deceived. What, then, would be the use of all I have suffered? The heart breaks when, after having been elated by flattering hopes, it sees all these illusions destroyed. Faria has dreamed this; Cardinal Spada buried no treasures here; perhaps he never came here, or, if he did, Cæsar Borgia, the intrepid adventurer, the stealthy and indefatigable plunderer, has followed him, discovered his traces, pursued them as I have done; like me, raised the stone, and descending before me has left me nothing." He remained motionless and pensive, his eyes fixed on the sombre aperture that was open at his feet.

"Now that I expect nothing, now that I no longer entertain the slightest hopes, the end of this adventure becomes a simple matter of curiosity."

Then he descended, a smile on his lips, and murmuring that last word of human philosophy, "Perhaps!" But instead of the darkness and the thick and mephitic atmosphere he had expected to find, Dantès saw a dim

and bluish light, which, as well as the air, entered, not merely by the aperture he had just formed, but by the interstices and crevices of the rock which were visible from without, and through which he could distinguish the blue sky and the waving branches of the evergreen oaks and the tendrils of the creepers that grew from the rocks.

After having stood a few minutes in the cavern, the atmosphere of which was rather warm than damp, Dantès's eye, habituated as it was to darkness, could pierce even to the remotest angles of the cavern, which was of granite that sparkled like diamonds.

"Alas!" said Edmond, smiling, "these are the treasures the cardinal has left, and the good abbé, seeing in a dream these glittering walls, has indulged in fallacious hopes."

But he called to mind the words of the will which he knew by heart: "In the farthest angle of the second opening," said the cardinal's will. He had only found the first grotto; he had now to seek the second.

Dantès commenced his search. He reflected that this second grotto must doubtless penetrate deeper into the isle. He examined the stones, and sounded one part of the wall where he fancied the opening existed, masked for precaution's sake.

The pickaxe sounded for a moment with a dull sound that covered Dantès's forehead with large drops of perspiration. At last it seemed to him that one part of the wall gave forth a more hollow and deeper echo. He eagerly advanced, and with the quickness of perception that no one but a prisoner possesses saw that it was there, in all probability, the opening must be.

However, he, like Cæsar Borgia, knew the value of time; and, in order to avoid fruitless toil, he sounded all the other walls with his pickaxe, struck the earth with the butt of his gun, and finding nothing that appeared suspicious, returned to that part of the wall whence issued the consoling sound he had before heard.

He again struck it, and with greater force.

Then a singular sight presented itself. As he struck the wall a species of stucco, similar to that used as the ground of arabesques, detached itself, and fell to the ground in flakes, exposing a large white stone. The aperture of the rock had been closed with stones, then this stucco had been applied, and painted to imitate granite.

The pickaxe that had seemed so heavy was now like a feather in his grasp; he seized it, and again attacked the wall. After several blows he perceived that the stones were not cemented, but merely placed one upon the other and covered with stucco; he inserted the point of his pickaxe, and using the handle as a lever, soon saw with joy the stone turn as if on hinges and fall at his feet. He had nothing more to do now but with the iron tooth of the pickaxe to draw the stones towards him one by one. The first aperture was sufficiently large to enter, but by waiting he could still cling to hope, and retard the certainty of deception.

At last, after fresh hesitation, Dantès entered the second grotto. The second grotto was lower and more gloomy than the former; the air that could only enter by the newly-formed opening had that mephitic smell Dantès was surprised not to find in the first. He waited in order to allow pure air to displace the foul atmosphere, and then entered. At the left of the opening was a dark and deep angle. But to Dantès's eye there was no darkness. He glanced round the second grotto; it was, like the first, empty.

The treasure, if it existed, was buried in this corner. The time had at length arrived; two feet of earth removed, and Dantès's fate would be decided. He advanced towards the angle, and summoning all his resolution, attacked the ground with the pickaxe. At the fifth or sixth blow the pickaxe struck against an iron substance. Never did funeral knell, never did alarm-bell, produce a greater effect on the hearer. Had Dantès found nothing he could not have become more ghastly

pale. He again struck his pickaxe into the earth, and encountered the same resistance, but not the same sound.

"It is a casket of wood bound with iron," thought he.

At this moment a shadow passed rapidly before the opening. Dantès seized his gun, sprang through the opening, and mounted the stair. A wild goat had passed before the mouth of the cave, and was feeding at a little distance.

This would have been a favourable occasion to secure his dinner; but Dantès feared lest the report of his gun should attract attention.

He reflected an instant, cut a branch of a resinous tree, lighted it at the fire at which the smugglers had prepared their breakfast, and descended with this torch. He wished to see all. He approached the hole he had formed with the torch, and saw that his pickaxe had in reality struck against iron and wood. He planted his torch in the ground and resumed his labour. In an instant a space three feet long by two feet broad was cleared, and Dantès could see an oaken coffer bound with cut steel; in the midst of the lid he saw engraved on a silver plate, which was still untarnished, the arms of the Spada family—namely, a sword, *pale*, on an oval shield, like all the Italian armorial bearings, and surmounted by a cardinal's hat. Dantès easily recognized them; Faria had so often drawn them for him. There was no longer any doubt the treasure was there; no one would have been at such pains to conceal an empty casket.

In an instant he had cleared every obstacle away, and he saw successively the lock, placed between two padlocks, and the two handles at each end, all carved as things were carved at that epoch, when art rendered the commonest metals precious. Dantès seized the handles, and strove to lift the coffer; it was impossible. He sought to open it; lock and padlock were closed—these faithful guardians seemed unwilling to surrender their trust. Dantès inserted the sharp end of the pick-

axe between the coffer and the lid, and pressing with all his force on the handle, burst open the fastenings. The hinges yielded in their turn and fell, still holding in their grasp fragments of the planks, and all was open.

A vertigo seized Edmond; he cocked his gun and laid it beside him. He then closed his eyes as children do in order to perceive in shining night of their own imagination more stars than are visible in the firmament; then he reopened them, and stood motionless with amazement.

Three compartments divided the coffer. In the first blazed piles of golden coin; in the second bars of unpolished gold, which possessed nothing attractive save their value, were ranged; in the third Edmond grasped handfuls of diamonds, pearls, and rubies, which, as they fell on one another, sounded like hail against glass.

After having touched, felt, examined these treasures, Edmond rushed through the caverns like a man seized with frenzy; he leapt on a rock, from whence he could behold the sea. He was alone—alone with these countless, these unheard-of, treasures! Was he awake, or was it but a dream?

He then set himself to work to count his fortune. There were a thousand ingots of gold, each weighing from two to three pounds. Then he piled up twenty-five thousand crowns, each worth about four pounds sterling of our money, and bearing the effigies of Alexander VI. and his predecessors; and he saw that the compartment was not half empty. And he measured ten double handfuls of precious stones, many of which, mounted by the most famous workmen, were valuable for their execution. Dantès saw the light gradually disappear, and fearing to be surprised in the cavern, left it, his gun in his hand. A piece of biscuit and a small quantity of rum formed his supper, and he snatched a few hours' sleep, lying over the mouth of the cave.

This night was one of those delicious and yet terrible ones of which he had already passed two or three in his lifetime.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE UNKNOWN.

DAYLIGHT, for which Dantès had so eagerly and impatiently waited, again dawned upon the desert shores of Monte-Cristo. With the first dawn of day Dantès resumed his researches. Returning to the entrance of the cave, he raised the stone that covered it, and descending to the place that contained the treasure, filled his pockets with precious stones, put the box together as well and securely as he could, sprinkled fresh sand over the spot from which it had been taken, and then carefully trod down the ground to give it everywhere a similar appearance; then quitting the grotto he replaced the stone, heaping on it broken masses of rocks and rough fragments of crumbling granite, filling the interstices with earth, into which was skilfully mingled a quantity of rapidly-growing plants, such as the wild myrtle and flowering thorn; then carefully watering these, he scrupulously effaced every trace of footmark, leaving the approach to the cavern as savage-looking and untrodden as he had found it. This done, he impatiently awaited the return of his companions.

On the sixth day the smugglers returned. From a distance Dantès recognized the cut and manner of sailing of *La Jeune Amélie*, and dragging himself with affected difficulty towards the landing-place, he met his companions with an assurance that, although considerably better than when they quitted him, he still suffered acutely from his late accident. He then inquired how they had fared in their trip.

Edmond preserved the most admirable self-command, not suffering the faintest indication of a smile to escape him at the enumeration of all the benefits he would have reaped had he been able to quit the isle; but as *La Jeune Amélie* had merely come to Monte-Cristo to

fetch him away, he embarked that same evening and proceeded with the captain to Leghorn. Arrived at Leghorn, he repaired to the house of a Jew, a dealer in precious stones, to whom he disposed of four of his smallest diamonds for five thousand francs each.

Dantès half feared that such valuable jewels in the hands of a poor sailor like himself might excite suspicion; but the cunning purchaser asked no troublesome questions concerning a bargain by which he gained at least four thousand francs.

The following day Dantès presented Jacopo with an entirely new vessel, accompanying the gift by a donation of one hundred piastres that he might provide himself with a suitable crew and other requisites for his outfit, upon condition of his going direct to Marseilles, for the purpose of inquiring after an old man named Louis Dantès, residing in the Allées de Meillan, and also a young female called Mercédès, an inhabitant of the Catalan village.

Jacopo could scarcely believe his senses at receiving this munificent present, which Dantès hastened to account for by saying that he had merely been a sailor from whim and a desire to spite his friends, who did not allow him as much money as he liked to spend; but that on his arrival at Leghorn he had come into possession of a large fortune left him by an uncle, whose sole heir he was. The superior education of Dantès gave an air of such extreme probability to this statement that it never once occurred to Jacopo to doubt its accuracy.

The term for which Edmond had engaged to serve on board *La Jeune Amélie* having expired, Dantès took leave of the captain, who at first tried all his powers of persuasion to induce him to remain one of the crew, but having been told the history of the legacy he ceased to importune him further. The succeeding morning Jacopo set sail for Marseilles, with directions from Dantès to rejoin him at the island of Monte-Cristo.

Having seen Jacopo fairly out of the harbour, Dantès

proceeded to make his final adieus on board *La Jeune Amélie*, distributing such liberal gratuities among her crew as procured him unanimous good wishes and expressions of cordial interest in all that concerned him; to the captain he promised to write when he had made up his mind as to his future plans. This leave-taking over, Dantès departed for Genoa. At the moment of his arrival a small yacht was being tried in the bay; this yacht had been built by order of an Englishman, who, having heard that the Genoese excelled all other builders along the shores of the Mediterranean in the construction of fast-sailing vessels, was desirous of possessing a specimen of their skill. The price agreed upon between the Englishman and the Genoese builder was forty thousand francs.

Dantès, struck with the beauty and capabilities of the little vessel, applied to its owner to transfer it to him, offering sixty thousand francs, upon condition of being allowed to take immediate possession of it. A bargain was struck. Dantès led the owner of the yacht to the dwelling of a Jew; retired with the latter individual for a few minutes to a small back parlour, and upon their return from thence the Jew counted out to the shipbuilder the sum of sixty thousand francs in bright golden money.

The delighted builder then offered his services in providing a suitable crew for the little vessel, but this Dantès declined with many thanks, saying he was accustomed to cruise about quite alone, and his principal pleasure consisted in managing his yacht himself. The only thing the builder could oblige him in would be to contrive a sort of secret closet in the cabin at his bed's head, the closet to contain three divisions so constructed as to be concealed from all but himself. The builder cheerfully undertook the commission, and promised to have these secret places completed by the next day, Dantès furnishing the size and plan upon which he desired they should be arranged.

The following day Dantès sailed with his yacht from

the port of Genoa, amid the gaze of an immense crowd drawn together by curiosity to see the rich Spanish nobleman who preferred managing his vessel himself; but their wonder was soon exchanged for admiration at the perfect skill with which Dantès handled the helm, and, without quitting it, making his little vessel perform every movement he chose to direct.

The spectators followed the little vessel with their eyes so long as it remained visible; they then turned their conjectures upon her probable destination. Some insisted she was making for Corsica, others the Isle of Elba; bets were offered to any amount that she was bound for Spain, while Africa was positively reported by many persons as her intended destination; but no one thought of Monte-Cristo.

Yet thither it was that Dantès guided his vessel, and at Monte-Cristo he arrived at the close of the second day. His bark had proved herself a first-class sailer, and had come the distance from Genoa in thirty-five hours. Dantès had carefully noted the general appearance of the shore, and instead of landing at the usual place he dropped anchor in the little creek.

The isle was utterly deserted, nor did it seem as though human foot had trodden on it since he quitted it: his treasure was just as he had left it.

Early on the following morning he commenced the removal of his riches, and ere nightfall the whole of his immense wealth was safely deposited in the secret compartments of his hidden closet.

A week passed by. Dantès employed it in manœuvring his yacht round the island, studying it as a skilful horseman would the animal he destined for some important service, till at the end of that time he was perfectly conversant with its good and bad qualities. The former Dantès proposed to augment; the latter to remedy.

Upon the eighth day of his being on the island he discerned a small vessel crowding all sail towards Monte-Cristo. As it neared he recognized it as the bark he had

given to Jacopo. He immediately signalled it; his signal was returned, and in two hours afterwards the bark lay at anchor beside the yacht.

A mournful answer awaited each of Edmond's eager inquiries as to the information Jacopo had obtained.

Old Dantès was dead, and Mercédès had disappeared.

Dantès listened to these melancholy tidings with outward calmness, but leaping lightly ashore, he signified his desire to be quite alone. In a couple of hours he returned. Two of the men from Jacopo's yacht came on board the yacht to assist in navigating it, and he commanded she should be steered direct to Marseilles.

Without divulging his secret, Dantès could not give sufficiently clear instructions to an agent—there were, besides, other particulars he was desirous of ascertaining, and those were of a nature he alone could investigate in a manner satisfactory to himself. His looking-glass had assured him during his stay at Leghorn that he ran no risk of recognition; added to which, he had now the means of adopting any disguise he thought proper. One fine morning, then, his yacht, followed by the little bark, boldly entered the port of Marseilles, and anchored exactly opposite the memorable spot from whence, on the never-to-be-forgotten-night of his departure for the Château d'If, he had been put on board the vessel destined to convey him thither.

Still Dantès could not view without a shudder the approach of a gendarme, who accompanied the officers, deputed to demand his bill of health ere the yacht was permitted to hold communication with the shore; but with that perfect self-possession he had acquired during his acquaintance with Faria, Dantès coolly presented an English passport he had obtained from Leghorn, and with that prompt attention which all such English documents receive, he was informed there existed no obstacle to his immediate debarkation.

The first object that attracted the attention of Dantès as he landed on the Canebière, was one of the crew be-

longing to the *Pharaon*. Edmond hailed the appearance of this man, who had served under himself, as a sure test of the safe and perfect change time had worked in his own appearance. Going straight towards him, he commenced a variety of questions on different subjects, carefully watching the man's countenance as he did so; but not a word or look implied his having the slightest idea of ever having seen before the individual with whom he was then conversing.

Giving the sailor a piece of money in return for his civility, Dantès proceeded onwards; but ere he had gone many steps, he heard the man loudly calling him to stop. Dantès instantly turned to meet him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the honest fellow, in almost breathless haste, "but I believe you made a mistake—you intended to give me a two-franc piece, and see, you gave me a double napoleon."

"Thank you, my friend. I see that I made a trifling mistake, as you say, but by way of rewarding your honest spirit, I give you another double napoleon that you may drink to my health and be able to ask your messmates to join you."

So extreme was the surprise of the sailor, that he was unable even to thank Edmond, whose receding figure he continued to gaze after in speechless astonishment. At length, when Dantès, had wholly disappeared, he drew a deep breath, and with another look at his gold, he returned to the quay, saying to himself, "Ah! that's one of them nabob gentlemen from Ingy, no doubt; nobody else could afford to chuck gold about like that. Well, he said I was to drink to his health, and so I will with all my heart."

Having obtained the address of the person to whom the house in the Allées de Meillan belonged, Dantès next proceeded thither, and, under the name of Lord Wilmore (the same appellation as that contained in his passport), purchased the small dwelling for the sum of 25,000 francs, at least 10,000 more than it was worth;

but had its owner asked ten times the sum he did, it would unhesitatingly have been given. The very same day the occupants of the apartments on the fifth floor of the house, now become the property of Dantès, were duly informed by the notary who had arranged the necessary transfer of deeds, etc., that the new landlord gave them their choice of any of the rooms in the house without the least augmentation of rent, upon condition of their giving instant possession of the two small chambers they at present inhabited.

This strange event served to find food for wonder and curiosity in the neighbourhood of the Allées de Meillan, and a multitude of various conjectures were afloat as to the probable cause of the house being so suddenly and mysteriously disposed of; but each surmise seemed to wander farther and farther from the real truth.

But that which raised public astonishment to a climax and set all speculation at defiance was the circumstance of the same stranger who had in the morning visited the Allées de Meillan being seen in the evening walking in the little village of the Catalans, and afterwards observed to enter a poor fisherman's hut, and to pass more than an hour in inquiring after persons who had either been dead or gone away for more than fifteen or sixteen years. But on the following day the family from whom all these particulars had been asked received a handsome present, consisting of an entirely new fishing-boat, with a full supply of excellent nets.

The delighted recipients of these munificent gifts would gladly have poured out their thanks to their generous benefactor; but they had seen him, upon quitting the hut, merely give some orders to a sailor, and then springing lightly on horseback, quit Marseilles by the Porte d'Aix.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE AUBERGE OF PONT DU GARD.

SUCH of my readers as have made a pedestrian excursion to the south of France may perchance have noticed, midway between the town of Beaucaire and the vllage of Bellegarde a small roadside inn, from the front of which hung, creaking and flapping in the wind, a sheet of tin covered with a caricature resemblance of the Pont du Gard. This modern place of entertainment stood on the left-hand side of the grand route, turning its back upon the Rhone. It also boasted of what in Languedoc is styled a garden, consisting of a small plot of ground, a full view of which might be obtained from a door immediately opposite the grand portal by which travellers were ushered in to partake of the hospitality of mine host of the Pont du Gard.

For nearly the last eight years the small auberge we have just been describing had been kept by a man and his wife, with two servants—one a strong, sturdy wench, answering to the name of Trinette, officiated in the capacity of chambermaid, while the other, a shock-headed country lad, named Pacaud, undertook the management of the out-door work, and contented himself with the title of *garçon d'écurie*, or ostler, as we should style it in England.

The aubergiste himself was a man of from forty to forty-five years of age, tall, strong, and bony, a perfect specimen of the natives of those southern latitudes; he had dark, sparkling, and deep-set eyes, curved nose, and teeth white as those of a carnivorous animal; his hair, which, spite of the light touch time had as yet left on it, seemed as though it refused to assume any other colour than its own, was like his beard, which he wore under his chin, thick and curly, and but slightly mingled with a few silvery threads. This anxious, care-

worn aubergiste was no other than our ci-devant acquaintance Caderousse. His wife, on the contrary, whose maiden name had been Madeleine Radelle, was pale, meagre, and sickly-looking. She remained nearly always in her chamber, situated on the first floor, sitting shivering in her chair or extended, languid and feeble, on her bed, while her husband kept his daily watch at the door.

The sobriquet of La Carconte had been bestowed on Madeleine Radelle from the circumstance of her having been born in a village so called, situated between Salon and Lanbèse; and as a custom existed among the inhabitants of that part of France where Caderousse lived of styling every person by some particular and distinctive appellation, her husband had bestowed on her the name of La Carconte in place of her sweet and euphonious name of Madeleine, which, in all probability, his rude, guttural language would not have enabled him to pronounce.

On the present day, Caderousse was, as usual, at his place of observation before the door, his eyes glancing listlessly from a piece of closely-shaven grass—on which some fowls were industriously, though fruitlessly, endeavouring to turn up some grain or insect suited to their palate—to the deserted road, the two extremities of which pointed respectively north and south, when he was roused from his daily speculations as to the possibility of the auberge of the Pont du Gard ever again being called upon to exercise its hospitable capabilities to any chance visitant by the shrill voice of his wife summoning him to her presence with all speed.

Had Caderousse but retained his post a few minutes longer, he might have caught a dim outline of something approaching from the direction of Bellegarde; as the moving object drew nearer, he would easily have perceived it consisted of a man and horse, between whom the kindest and most amiable understanding appeared to exist. The horse was of Hungarian breed, and ambled along with that easy pace peculiar to that race of animals.

His rider was a priest, dressed in black, and wearing a three-cornered hat; and, spite of the ardent rays of a noonday sun, the pair came on at a tolerably smart trot.

Having arrived before the auberge du Pont du Gard, the horse stopped. The priest, dismounting, led his steed by the bridle in search of some place to which he could secure him. Availing himself of a handle that projected from a half-fallen door, he tied the animal sately, patted him kindly, and having drawn a red cotton handkerchief from his pocket, wiped away the perspiration that streamed from his brow; then, advancing to the door, struck thrice with the end of his iron-shod stick. At this unusual sound, a huge black dog came rushing to meet the daring assailant of his ordinarily tranquil abode, snarling and displaying his sharp white teeth with a determined hostility that abundantly proved how little he was accustomed to society. At that moment a heavy footstep was heard descending the wooden staircase that led from the upper floor, and, with many bows and courteous smiles, mine host of the Pont du Gard welcomed the blessing Heaven had sent him in the shape of a weary traveller; while, retreating into the house with backward step, he besought his guest would honour him by entering also.

"You are welcome, sir, most welcome!" repeated the astonished Caderousse in his blandest tones. "Now, then, Margontin," cried he, speaking to the dog, "will you be quiet?—Pray don't heed him, sir!—he only barks, he never bites! I make no doubt a glass of good wine would be acceptable this dreadfully hot day!" Then perceiving for the first time the description of traveller he had to entertain, Caderousse hastily exclaimed, "A thousand pardons, your reverence! I really did not observe whom I had the honour to receive under my poor roof. What would you please to have, M. l'Abbé? What refreshment can I offer you? All I have is at your service."

The priest gazed on the individual addressing him

with a long and searching gaze—there even seemed a disposition on his part to court a similar scrutiny on the part of the aubergiste; then, remarking in the countenance of the latter no other expression than extreme surprise at his own want of attention to an inquiry so courteously worded, he deemed it as well to terminate this dumb show, and therefore said, speaking with a strong Italian accent,—

"You are, I presume, M. Caderousse?"

"Your reverence is quite correct," answered the host, even more surprised at the question than he had been by the silence which had prefaced it; "I am Gaspard Caderousse, at your service."

"Gaspard Caderousse!" rejoined the priest. "Yes, that agrees both with the baptismal appellation and surname of the individual I allude to. You formerly lived, I believe, in the Allées de Meillan, on the fourth floor of a small house situated there?"

"I did."

"Where you followed the business of a tailor?"

"True, I was a tailor, till the trade fell off so as not to afford me a living. Then it is so very hot at Marseilles, that really I could bear it no longer; and it is my idea that all the respectable inhabitants will be obliged to follow my example and quit it. But talking of heat, is there nothing I can offer you by way of refreshment?"

"Yes; let me have a bottle of your best wine, and then, with your permission, we will resume our conversation from where we left off."

"As you please, M. l'Abbé," said Caderousse, who, anxious not to lose the present opportunity of finding a customer for one of the few bottles of vin de Cahors still remaining in his possession, hastily raised a trap-door in the floor of the apartment they were in, which served both as parlour and kitchen.

Upon his issuing forth from his subterranean retreat at the expiration of five minutes, he found the abbé seated on a species of stool, leaning his elbow on a

table, while Margontin, whose animosity seemed appeased by the traveller having pronounced the unusual command for refreshments, had crept up to him, and had established himself very comfortably between his knees, his long, skinny neck resting on his lap, while his dim eye was fixed earnestly on the traveller's face.

"Are you quite alone?" inquired the guest, as Caderousse placed before him the bottle of wine and a glass.

"Quite, quite alone," replied the man, "or, at least all but so, M. l'Abbé; for my poor wife, who is the only person in the house besides myself, is laid up with illness, and unable to render me the least assistance, poor thing!"

"You are married, then?" said the priest, with a species of interest, glancing round as he spoke at the scanty style of the accommodations and humble fittings-up of the apartment.

"Ah, M. l'Abbé," said Caderousse, with a sigh, "it is easy to perceive I am not a rich man; but in this world a man does not thrive the better for being honest."

The abbé fixed on him a searching, penetrating glance.

"I can certainly say that much for myself," repeated the aubergiste, fairly sustaining the scrutiny of the abbé's gaze. "I can boast with truth of being an honest man, and," continued he significantly, shaking his head, "that is more than every one can say nowadays."

"So much the better for you, if what you assert be true," said the abbé; "for I am firmly persuaded that, sooner or later, the good will be rewarded and the wicked punished."

"Such words as those belong to your profession, M. l'Abbé," answered Caderousse, "and you do well to repeat them; but," added he, with a bitter expression of countenance, "you cannot make people believe them in opposition to what passes before them every day when the reverse takes place, and it is the wicked man who prospers, and the honest, deserving man who suffers."

"You are wrong to speak thus," said the abbé; "and, perhaps, I may, in my own person, be able to prove to you how completely you are in error in coming to so mischievous and dangerous a conclusion."

"What mean you?" inquired Caderousse, with a look of surprise.

"In the first place it is requisite I should be satisfied you are the person I am in search of."

"What proofs do you require?"

"Did you in the year 1814 or 1815 know anything of a young sailor named Dantès?"

"Did I? I should think I did. Poor, dear Edmond! Why, Edmond Dantès and myself were intimate friends," exclaimed Caderousse, whose countenance assumed an almost purple hue as he caught the penetrating gaze of the abbé fixed on him, while the clear, calm eye of the questioner seemed to cover him with confusion.

"You remind me," said the priest, "that the young man concerning whom I asked you was said to bear the name of Edmond."

"Said to bear the name!" repeated Caderousse, becoming excited and eager. "Why, he was so called as truly as I myself bear the appellation of Gaspard Caderousse; but, M. l'Abbé, tell me, I pray, what has become of poor Edmond. Did you know him? Is he alive and at liberty? Is he prosperous and happy?"

"He died a more wretched, hopeless, heart-broken prisoner than the felons who pay the penalty of their crimes at the galleys of Toulon."

A deadly paleness succeeded the deep suffusion which had before spread itself over the countenance of Caderousse, who turned away, but not so much so as to prevent the priest's observing him wiping away the tears from his eyes with a corner of the red handkerchief twisted round his head.

"Poor fellow—poor fellow!" murmured Caderousse. "Well, there, M. l'Abbé, is another proof that good people are never rewarded on this earth, and that none

but the wicked prosper. Ah," continued Caderousse, speaking in the highly-coloured language of the South, "the world grows worse and worse. Why does not God, if He really hates the wicked, as He is said to do, send down brimstone and fire and consume them altogether.'

"You speak as though you had loved this young Dantès," observed the abbé, without taking any notice of his companion's vehemence.

"And so I did," replied Caderousse, "though once, I confess, I envied him his good fortune; but I swear to you, M. l'Abbé—I swear to you by everything a man holds dear—I have since then deeply and sincerely lamented his unhappy fate."

There was a brief silence, during which the fixed, searching eye of the abbé was employed in scrutinizing the agitated features of the aubergiste.

"You knew the poor lad, then," continued Caderousse.

"Nay, I was merely called to see him when on his dying bed, that *I* might administer to him the consolations of religion."

"And of what did he die?" asked Caderousse in a choking voice.

"Of what think you do young and strong men die in prison, when they have scarcely numbered their thirtieth year, unless it be of the horrors of that prison which has spread its stony walls against their breathing the air of heaven, or participating in the sacred affections a gracious Creator permitted to find growth within the human breast? Edmond Dantès died in prison of sorrow and a broken heart."

Caderousse wiped away the large drops of perspiration that gathered on his brow.

"But the strangest part of the story is," resumed the abbé, "that Dantès, even in his dying moments, swore by his crucified Redeemer that he was utterly ignorant of the cause of his imprisonment."

"And so he was," murmured Caderousse. "How

should he have been otherwise? Ah, M. l'Abbé, the poor fellow told you the truth."

"And for that reason he besought me to try and clear up a mystery he had never been able to penetrate, and to clear his memory should any foul spot or stain have fallen on it."

And here the look of the abbé, becoming more and more fixed, seemed to rest with ill-concealed satisfaction on the gloomy depression which seemed rapidly spreading over the countenance of Caderousse.

"A rich Englishman," continued the abbé, "who had been his companion in misfortune, but had been released from prison during the second restoration, was possessed of a diamond of immense value. This precious jewel he bestowed on Dantès upon himself quitting the prison, as a mark of his gratitude for the kindness and brotherly care with which Dantès had nursed him in a severe illness he underwent during his confinement. Instead of employing this diamond in attempting to bribe his jailers, who might only have taken it and then betrayed him to the governor, Dantès carefully preserved it, that in the event of his getting out of prison he might have wherewithal to live, for the produce of such a diamond would have quite sufficed to make his fortune."

"Then, I suppose," asked Caderousse, with eager, glowing looks, "that it was a stone of immense value?"

"Why, everything is relative," answered the abbé. "To one in Edmond's position the diamond certainly was of great value. It was estimated at 50,000 francs."

"Bless me!" exclaimed Caderousse, "what a sum—50,000 francs! Surely the diamond was as large as a nut to be worth all that!"

"No," replied the abbé, "it was not of such a size as that; but you shall judge for yourself. I have it with me."

The sharp gaze of Caderousse was instantly directed towards the priest's garment, as though hoping to discover the talked-of treasure.

Calmly drawing forth from his pocket a small box covered with black shagreen, the abbé opened it, and displayed to the delighted eyes of Caderousse the sparkling jewel it contained, set in a ring of admirable workmanship.

"And that diamond," cried Caderousse, almost breathless with eager admiration, "you say, is worth 50,000 francs?"

"It is, without the setting, which is also valuable," replied the abbé, as he closed the box and returned it to his pocket, while its brilliant hues seemed still to dance before the eyes of the fascinated aubergiste.

"But how comes this diamond in your possession, M. l'Abbe? Did Edmond make you his heir?"

"No, merely his testamentary executor. When dying, the unfortunate youth said to me, 'I once possessed four dear and faithful friends, besides the maiden to whom I was betrothed; and I feel convinced they have all unfeignedly grieved over my loss. The name of one of the four friends I allude to is Caderousse.'"

The aubergiste shivered as though he felt the dead, cold hand of the betrayed Edmond grasping his own.

"'Another of the number,'" continued the abbé, without seeming to notice the emotion of Caderousse, "'is called Danglars; and the third, spite of being my rival, entertained a very sincere affection for me.'"

A fiendish smile played over the features of Caderousse, who was about to break in upon the abbé's speech, when the latter, waving his hand, said,—

"Allow me to finish first, and then if you have any observations to make, you can do so afterwards.

"'The third of my friends, although my rival, was much attached to me; his name was Fernand. That of my betrothed was—' Stay, stay," continued the abbé, "I have forgotten what he called her."

"Mercédès!" cried Caderousse eagerly.

"True," said the abbé, with a stifled sigh. "Mercédès it was."

"Go on," urged Caderousse.

"Bring me a carafe of water," said the abbé.

Caderousse quickly performed the stranger's bidding; and after pouring some into a glass, and slowly swallowing its contents, the abbé, resuming his usual placidity of manner, said, as he placed his empty glass on the table,—

"Where did we leave off?"

"Oh, that the betrothed of Edmond was called Mercédès."

"To be sure. 'Well, then,' said Dantès—for you understand I repeat his words just as he uttered them—'you will go to Marseilles.' Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"'For the purpose of selling this diamond, the produce of which you will divide into five equal parts, and give an equal portion to the only persons who have loved me upon earth.'"

"But why into five parts?" asked Caderousse; "you only mentioned four persons."

"Because the fifth is dead, as I hear. The fifth sharer in Edmond's bequest was his own father."

"Too true, too true!" ejaculated Caderousse, almost suffocated by the contending passions which assailed him, "the poor old man did die!"

"I learned so much at Marseilles," replied the abbé, making a strong effort to appear indifferent; "but from the length of time that has elapsed since the death of the elder Dantès, I was unable to obtain any particulars of his end. You possibly may be capable of furnishing me with such minute circumstances as may serve to substantiate the decease of the elder Dantès."

"I do not know who could if I could not," said Caderousse. "Why, I lived almost on the same floor with the poor old man. Ah, yes; about a year after the disappearance of his son the old man died."

"Of what did he die?"

"Why, the doctors called his complaint an internal

inflammation, I believe. His acquaintances said he died of grief; but I, who saw him in his dying moments, I say he died of——"

"Of what?" asked the priest, anxiously and eagerly.

"Why, of downright starvation."

"Starvation!" exclaimed the abbé, springing from his seat. "Why, the vilest animals are not suffered to die by such a death as that. Oh, it is impossible, utterly impossible!"

"What I have said, I have said," answered Caderousse.

"And you are a fool for having said anything about it," said a voice from the top of the stairs. "Why should you meddle with what does not concern you?"

The two male speakers turned round quickly, and perceived the sickly countenance of La Carconte leaning over the rail of the staircase. Attracted by the sound of voices, she had feebly dragged herself down the stairs, and, seated on the lower step, she had listened to the foregoing conversation.

"Mind your own business, wife," replied Caderousse sharply. "This gentleman asks me for information which common politeness will not permit me to refuse."

"Politeness, you simpleton!" retorted La Carconte. "What have you to do with politeness, I should like to know? Better study a little common prudence. How do you know the motives that person may have for trying to extract all he can from you?"

"I pledge you my sacred word, madame," said the abbé, "that my intentions are free from all thoughts of harm or injury to you or yours; and that your husband can incur no risk provided he answers me candidly."

"Ah, that's all very fine," retorted the woman. "Nothing is easier than to begin with fair promises."

"Nay, nay, my good woman, make yourself perfectly easy, I beg of you. Whatever evils may befall you, they will not be occasioned by my instrumentality, that I solemnly promise you."

Some inarticulate sounds escaped La Carconte; then letting her head, which she had raised during the excitement of conversation, again droop on to her lap, she commenced her usual aguish trembling, the result of her feverish attack, leaving the two speakers to resume the conversation, but still remaining herself so placed as to be able to hear every word they uttered.

Again the abbé had been obliged to swallow a draught of water to calm the emotions that threatened to overpower him. When he had sufficiently recovered himself, he said,—

"It appears, then, that the miserable old man you were telling me of was forsaken by every one. Surely had not such been the case, he would not have perished by so dreadful a death as you described."

"Why, he was not altogether forsaken," continued Caderousse; "for Mercédès the Catalan and M. Morrel were very kind to him; but somehow the poor old man had contracted a profound hatred of Fernand—the very person," added Caderousse, with a bitter smile, "that you named just now as being one of Dantès's faithful and attached friends."

"And was he not so?" asked the abbé.

"Gaspard, Gaspard!" murmured the woman from her seat on the stairs, "mind what you are saying!"

Caderousse made no reply to these words, though evidently irritated and annoyed by the interruption, but, addressing the abbé, said,—

"Can a man be faithful to another whose wife he covets and desires for himself? But Dantès was so honourable and true in his own nature that he believed everybody's professions of friendship. Poor Edmond! he was cruelly deceived; but it was a happy thing he never knew it, or he might have found it more difficult, when on his deathbed, to pardon his enemies. And whatever people may say," continued Caderousse, in his native language, which was not altogether devoid of rude poetry, "I cannot help being more frightened at

the idea of the malediction of the dead than the hatred of the living."

"Weak-minded coward!" exclaimed La Carconte.

"Do you, then, know in what manner Fernand injured Dantès?" inquired the abbé of Caderousse.

"Do I? No one better."

"Speak out, then; say what it was!"

"Gaspard!" cried La Carconte, "I cannot force you to do otherwise than as you please, but, if you are guided by me, you will have nothing to say on this subject."

"Well, well, wife," replied Caderousse, "I do not know but what you are right. I shall follow your advice."

"Then you are determined not to reveal the circumstances you alluded to?" said the abbé.

"Why, what good would it do?" asked Caderousse. "If the poor lad were living, and came to me to beg I would candidly tell which were his true and which his false friends, why, perhaps, I should not hesitate. But you tell me he is no more, and therefore can have nothing to do with hatred or revenge; so let all such feelings be buried with him."

"You prefer, then," said the abbé, "allowing me to bestow on men you say are false and treacherous the reward intended for faithful friendship?"

"That is true enough," returned Caderousse. "You say truly the gift of poor Edmond was not meant for such traitors as Fernand and Danglars; besides, what would it be to them? No more than a drop of water in the ocean."

"And remember, husband," chimed in La Carconte, "that to breathe one syllable against those two individuals would be to raise up against yourself two formidable enemies, who at a word could level you with the dust."

"How so?" inquired the abbé. "Are these persons, then, so rich and powerful?"

"Do you not know their history?"

"I do not. Pray relate it to me."

Caderousse seemed to reflect for a few instants, then said,—

"No, truly; it would take up too much time."

"Well, my good friend," returned the abbé, in a tone that indicated utter indifference on his part, "you are at liberty either to speak or be silent, just as you please; for my own part, I respect your scruples and admire your sentiments. So let the matter end. I shall do my duty as conscientiously as I can, and fulfil my promise to the dying man. My first business will be to dispose of this diamond."

So saying, the abbé again drew the small box from his pocket, opened it, and contrived to hold it in such a light that a bright flash of brilliant hues passed before the dazzled gaze of Caderousse.

"Wife, wife!" cried he, in a voice almost hoarse with eager emotion, "come hither and behold this rich diamond!"

"Diamond!" exclaimed La Carconte, rising and descending to the chamber with a tolerably firm step; "what diamond are you talking about?"

"Why, did you not hear all we said?" inquired Caderousse. "It is a beautiful diamond left by poor Edmond Dantès to be sold, and the money divided among his father, Mercédès, his betrothed bride, Fernand, Danglars, and myself. The jewel is worth at least 50,000 francs."

"Oh, what a splendid diamond!" cried the astonished woman.

"The fifth part of the produce of this stone belongs to us, then, does it not?" asked Caderousse, still devouring the glittering gem with his eyes.

"It does," replied the abbé, "with the addition of an equal division of that part intended for the elder Dantès, which I conceive myself at liberty to share equally with the four surviving persons."

"And wherefore among us four?" inquired Caderousse.

"As being the friends Edmond esteemed most faithful and devoted to him."

"I don't call those friends who betray and ruin you," murmured the wife in her turn, in a low, muttering voice.

"Of course not!" rejoined Caderousse quickly, "no more do I; and that was what I was observing to this gentleman just now. I said I looked upon it as a sacrilegious profanation to reward treachery, perhaps crime."

"Remember," answered the abbé calmly, as he replaced the jewel and its case in the pocket of his cassock, "it is your fault, not mine, that I do so. You will have the goodness to furnish me with the address of both Fernand and Danglars, in order that I may execute Edmond's last wishes."

The agitation of Caderousse became extreme, and large drops of perspiration rolled from his heated brows. As he saw the abbé rise from his seat and go towards the door, as though to ascertain if his horse were sufficiently refreshed to continue his journey, Caderousse and his wife exchanged looks of deep meaning with each other.

"There you see, wife," said the former, "this splendid diamond might all be ours if we chose!"

"Do you believe it?"

"Why, surely a man of his holy profession would not deceive us!"

"Well," replied La Carconte, "do as you like. For my part I wash my hands of the affair."

So saying, she once more climbed the staircase leading to her chamber, her frame shuddering with aguish chills, and her teeth rattling in her head, spite of the intense heat of the weather. Arrived at the top stair, she turned round, and called out in a warning tone to her husband,—

"Gaspard, consider well what you are about to do!"

"I have both reflected and decided," answered he.

La Carconte then entered her chamber, the flooring of which creaked beneath her heavy, uncertain tread, as she proceeded towards her armchair, into which she fell as though exhausted.

"Well," asked the abbé, as he returned to the apart-

ment below, "what have you made up your mind to do?"

"To tell you all I know," was the reply.

"I certainly think you act wisely in so doing," said the priest. "Not because I have the least desire to learn anything you may wish to conceal from me, but simply that if, through your assistance, I could distribute the legacy according to the wishes of the testator, why, so much the better—that is all."

"I trust, indeed, such will be the case, and that poor Edmond's dying bequest will be given only to such as you shall be convinced are his faithful and attached friends," replied Caderousse, his eyes sparkling and his face flushed with the hope of obtaining all himself.

"Now, then, begin, if you please," said the abbé; "I am all attention."

"Stop a minute," answered Caderousse; "we might be interrupted in the most interesting part of my recital, which would be a pity, and it is as well that your visit hither should be made known only to ourselves."

With these words he went stealthily to the door, which he closed, and by way of still greater precaution, bolted and barred it as he was accustomed to do at night. During this time the abbé had chosen his place for listening to the painful recital he expected Caderousse's would prove; he removed his seat into a corner of the room where he himself would be in deep shadow, while the light would be fully thrown on the narrator; then, with head bent down and hands clasped or rather clenched together, he prepared to give his whole attention to Caderousse, who seated himself on the little stool exactly opposite to him.

"Remember, I did not urge you to this," said the trembling voice of La Carconte, as though through the flooring of her chamber she viewed the scene that was enacting below.

"Enough, enough!" replied Caderousse, "say no

more about it. I will take all the consequences upon myself."

He then commenced as follows.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RECITAL.

"FIRST," said Caderousse, "sir, you must make me a promise."

"What is that?" inquired the abbé.

"Why, if you ever make use of the details I am about to give you, that you will never let any one know that it was I who supplied them, for the persons of whom I am about to talk are rich and powerful, and if they only laid the tips of their fingers on me, I should break to pieces like glass."

"Make yourself easy, my friend," said the abbé; "I am a priest, and confessions die in my breast."

This assurance seemed to give Caderousse courage.

"Well, then, under these circumstances," said Caderousse, "I will. Indeed I ought to undeceive you as to the friendship which poor Edmond believed so sincere and unquestionable."

"Begin with his father, if you please," said the abbé. "Edmond talked to me a great deal about the old man, for whom he had the deepest love."

"The history is a sad one, sir," said Caderousse, shaking his head; "perhaps you know all the earlier part of it?"

"Yes," answered the abbé. "Edmond related to me everything until the moment when he was arrested in a small cabaret close to Marseilles."

"At La Réserve! Oh yes, I can see it all before me this moment."

"Was it not his betrothal feast?"

"It was; and the feast that began so gaily had a very sorrowful ending: a commissary of police followed by four soldiers entered, and Dantès was arrested."

"Yes, and up to this point I know all," said the priest. "Dantès himself knew only that which personally concerned him, for he never beheld again the five persons I have named to you, nor heard mention of any one of them."

"Well, when Dantès was arrested, M. Morrel hastened to obtain the particulars, and they were very sad. The old man returned alone to his home, folded up his wedding suit with tears in his eyes, and paced up and down his chamber the whole day, and would not go to bed at all.

"The next day Mercédès came to implore the protection of M. de Villefort; she did not obtain it, however, and went to visit the old man. When she saw him so miserable and heart-broken, having passed a sleepless night, and not touched food since the previous day, she wished him to go with her that she might take care of him; but the old man would not consent.

"'No,' was the old man's reply; 'I will not leave this house, for my poor dear boy loves me better than anything else in the world, and if he gets out of prison he will come and see me the first thing, and what would he think if I did not wait here for him?'

"I heard all this from the window, for I was anxious that Mercédès should persuade the old man to accompany her, for his footsteps over my head night and day did not leave me a moment's repose."

"But did you not go upstairs and try to console the poor old man?" asked the abbé.

"Ah, sir," replied Caderousse, "we cannot console those who will not be consoled, and he was one of these; besides, I know not why, but he seemed to dislike seeing me. One night, however, I heard his sobs, and I could not resist my desire to go up to him; but when I reached his door he was no longer weeping but praying."

"Poor father!" murmured the priest.

"From day to day he lived on alone, and more and more solitary. M. Morrel and Mercédès came to see him, but his door was closed; and although I was certain he was at home, he would not make any answer. One day, when, contrary to his custom, he had admitted Mercédès, and the poor girl, in spite of her own grief and despair, endeavoured to console him, he said to her,—

"'Be assured, my dear daughter, he is dead; and instead of expecting him, it is he who is awaiting us. I am quite happy, for I am the oldest, and of course shall see him first.'

"At length the poor old fellow reached the end of all he had. He owed three quarters' rent, and they threatened to turn him out. He begged for another week, which was granted to him. I know this, because the landlord came into my apartment when he left his. For the three first days I heard him walking about as usual, but on the fourth I heard him no longer. I then resolved to go up to him at all risks. The door was closed, but I looked through the keyhole, and saw him so pale and haggard that, believing him very ill, I went and told M. Morrel, and then ran on to Mercédès. They both came immediately, M. Morrel bringing a doctor; and the doctor said it was an affection of the stomach, and ordered him a limited diet. I was there, too, and I never shall forget the old man's smile at this prescription. From that time he opened his door. He had an excuse for not eating any more, as the doctor had put him on a diet."

The abbé uttered a kind of groan.

"The story interests you, does it not, sir?" inquired Caderousse.

"Yes," replied the abbé; "it is very affecting."

"Mercédès came again, and she found him so altered that she was even more anxious than before to have him taken to her own abode. This was M. Morrel's wish also, who would fain have conveyed the old man against his

consent; but the old man resisted and cried so, that they were actually frightened. Mercédès remained, therefore, by his bedside, and M. Morrel went away, making a sign to the Catalane that he had left his purse on the chimney-piece. But availing himself of the doctor's order, the old man would not take any sustenance. At length (after nine days' despair and fasting) the old man died, cursing those who had caused his misery, and saying to Mercédès,—

"'If you ever see my Edmond again, tell him I die blessing him.'"

The abbé rose from his chair, made two turns round the chamber, and pressed his trembling hand against his parched throat.

"And you believe he died——"

"Of hunger, sir—of hunger," said Caderousse. "I am as certain of it as that we two are Christians."

The abbé with a shaking hand seized a glass of water that was standing by him half full, swallowed it at one gulp, and then resumed his seat with red eyes and pale cheeks.

"This was indeed a horrid event," said he in a hoarse voice.

"The more so, sir, as it was men's doing and not God's."

"Tell me of these men," said the abbé, "and remember, too," he added, in a voice that was nearly menacing in its tone, "you have promised to tell me everything. Tell me, therefore, who are these men who have killed the son with despair and the father with famine?"

"Two men jealous of him, sir—one from love, and the other from ambition—Fernand and Danglars."

"How was this jealousy manifested?"

"They denounced Edmond as a Bonapartist agent."

"Which of the two denounced him? Which was the real delinquent?"

"Both, sir; one with a letter, and the other put it in the post."

"And where was this letter written?"

"At La Réserve, the day before the festival of the betrothing."

"'Twas so, then—'twas so, then," murmured the abbé. "Oh, Faria, Faria, how well did you judge men and things!"

"What did you please to say, sir?" asked Caderousse.

"Nothing, nothing," replied the priest. "Go on."

"It was Danglars who wrote the denunciation with his left hand, that his writing might not be recognized, and Fernand who put it in the post."

"But," exclaimed the abbé suddenly, "you were there yourself."

"I!" said Caderousse astonished; "who told you I was there?"

The abbé saw he had overshot the mark, and he added quickly,—

"No one; but in order to have known everything so well, you must have been an eye-witness."

"True, true!" said Caderousse in a choking voice; "I was there."

"And did you not remonstrate against such infamy?" asked the abbé; "if not, you were an accomplice."

"Sir," replied Caderousse, "they had made me drink to such an excess that I nearly lost all perception. I had only an indistinct understanding of what was passing around me. I said all that a man in such a state could say; but they both assured me that it was a jest they were carrying on, and perfectly harmless."

"Next day—next day, sir, you must have seen plainly enough what they had been doing, yet you said nothing, though you were present when Dantès was arrested."

"Yes, sir, I was there, and very anxious to speak; but Danglars restrained me.

"'If he should really be guilty,' said he, 'and did really put into the Isle of Elba; if he is really charged with a letter for the Bonapartist committee at Paris, and if they find this letter upon him, those who have supported him will pass for his accomplices.'

"I confess I had my fears in the state in which politics then were, and I held my tongue; it was cowardly, I confess, but it was not criminal."

"I comprehend—you allowed matters to take their course; that was all."

"Yes, sir," answered Caderousse, "and my remorse preys on me night and day. I often ask pardon of God, I swear to you, because this action, the only one with which I have seriously to reproach myself with in all my life, is no doubt the cause of my abject condition. I am expiating a moment of selfishness, and thus it is I always say to Carconte, when she complains, 'Hold your tongue, woman; it is the will of God.'"

And Caderousse bowed his head with every sign of real repentance.

"Well, sir," said the abbé, "you have spoken unreservedly, and thus to accuse yourself is to deserve pardon."

"Unfortunately Edmond is dead, and has not pardoned me."

"He was ignorant," said the abbé.

"But he knows it all now," interrupted Caderousse; "they say the dead know everything."

There was a brief silence; the abbé rose and paced up and down pensively, and then resumed his seat.

"You have two or three times mentioned a M. Morrel," he said; "who was he?"

"The owner of the *Pharaon*, and patron of Dantès."

"And what part did he play in this sad drama?" inquired the abbé.

"The part of an honest man, full of courage and real regard. Twenty times he interceded for Edmond. When the emperor returned he wrote, implored, threatened, and so energetically that on the second restoration he was persecuted as a Bonapartist. Ten times, as I told you, he came to see Dantès's father, and offered to receive him into his own house; and the night or two before his death, as I have already said, he left his purse

on the mantelpiece, with which they paid the old man's debts, and buried him decently, and thus Edmond's father died as he had lived, without doing harm to any one. I have the purse still by me, a large one, made of red silk."

"And," asked the abbé, "is M. Morrel still alive?"

"Yes," replied Caderousse.

"In that case," replied the abbé, "he should be rich—happy."

Caderousse smiled bitterly.

"Yes; happy as myself," said he.

"What! M. Morrel unhappy?" exclaimed the abbé.

"He is reduced almost to the last extremity—nay, he is almost at the point of dishonour."

"How?"

"Yes," continued Caderousse, "and in this way; after five-and-twenty years of labour, after having acquired a most honourable name in the trade of Marseilles, M. Morrel is utterly ruined. He has lost five ships in two years, has suffered by the bankruptcy of three large houses, and his only hope now is in that very *Pharaon* which poor Dantès commanded, and which is expected from the Indies with a cargo of cochineal and indigo. If this ship founders like the others, he is a ruined man."

"And has the unfortunate man wife or children?" inquired the abbé.

"Yes, he has a wife, who in all this behaved like an angel; he has a daughter, who was about to marry the man she loved, but whose family now will not allow him to wed the daughter of a ruined man; he has besides a son, a lieutenant in the army, and, as you may suppose, all this, instead of soothing, doubles his grief. If he were alone in the world he would blow out his brains, and there would be an end."

"Horrible!" ejaculated the priest.

"And it is thus Heaven recompenses virtue, sir," added Caderousse. "You see, I, who never did a bad action but that I have told you of, I am in destitution.

After having seen my poor wife die of a fever, unable to do anything in the world for her, I shall die of hunger as old Dantès did, whilst Fernand and Danglars are rolling in wealth."

"How is that?"

"Because all their malpractices have turned to luck, while honest men have been reduced to misery."

"What has become of Danglars, the instigator, and therefore the most guilty?"

"What has become of him? Why, he left Marseilles, and was taken, on the recommendation of M. Morrel, who did not know his crime, as cashier into a Spanish bank. During the war with Spain he was employed in the commissariat of the French army, and made a fortune; then, with that money he speculated in the funds, and trebled or quadrupled his capital; and, having first married his banker's daughter, who left him a widower, he has married a second time a widow, a Madame de Nargonne, daughter of M. de Servieux, the king's chamberlain, who is in high favour at court. He is a millionaire, and they have made him a count, and now he is Le Comte Danglars, with a mansion in the Rue de Mont Blanc, with ten horses in his stables, six footmen in his antechamber, and I know not how many hundreds of thousands in his strong box."

"Ah!" said the abbé, with a peculiar tone, "he is happy."

"Happy? Who can answer for that? Happiness or unhappiness is the secret known but to oneself and the walls—walls have ears, but no tongue—but if a large fortune produces happiness, Danglars is happy."

"And Fernand?"

"Fernand? Why, that is another history."

"But how could a poor Catalan fisher-boy, without education and resources, make a fortune? I confess this staggers me."

"And it has staggered everybody. There must have been in his life some strange secret no one knows."

"But, then, by what visible steps has he attained this high fortune or high position?"

"Both sir: he has both fortune and position—both."

"This must be impossible."

"It would seem so, but listen and you will understand. Some days before the return of the emperor, Fernand was drawn in the conscription. The Bourbons left him quietly enough at the Catalans; but Napoleon returned, an extraordinary muster was determined on, and Fernand was compelled to join. I went too; but as I was older than Fernand, and had just married my poor wife, I was only sent to the coast. Fernand was enrolled in the active troop, went to the frontier with his regiment, and was at the battle of Ligny. The night after that battle he was sentry at the door of a general who carried on a secret correspondence with the enemy. That same night the general was to go over to the English. He proposed to Fernand to accompany him. Fernand agreed to do so, deserted his post, and followed the general.

"That which would have brought Fernand to a court-martial if Napoleon remained on the throne, served for his recommendation to the Bourbons. He returned to France with the epaulette of sub-lieutenant; and as the protection of the general, who is in the highest favour, was accorded to him, he was a captain in 1823, during the Spanish war—that is to say, at the time when Danglars made his early speculations. Fernand was a Spaniard, and being sent to Spain to ascertain the feeling of his fellow-countrymen, found Danglars there, became on very intimate terms with him, procured his general support from the royalists of the capital and the provinces, received promises and made pledges on his own part, guided his regiment by paths known to himself alone in gorges of the mountains kept by the royalists, and, in fact, rendered such services in this brief campaign that, after the taking of Trocadero, he was made colonel, and received the title of count and the cross of an officer of the Legion of Honour."

"Destiny! destiny!" murmured the abbé.

"Yes, but listen; this was not all. The war with Spain being ended, Fernand's career was checked by the long peace which seemed likely to endure throughout Europe. Greece only had risen against Turkey, and had begun her war of independence; all eyes were turned towards Athens—it was the fashion to pity and support the Greeks. The French Government, without protecting them openly, as you know, tolerated partial migrations. Fernand sought and obtained leave to go and serve in Greece, still having his name kept in the ranks of the army. Some time after, it was stated that the Comte de Morcerf (this was the name he bore) had entered the service of Ali Pacha, with the rank of instructor-general. Ali Pacha was killed, as you know; but before he died he recompensed the services of Fernand by leaving him a considerable sum, with which he returned to France, when his rank of lieutenant-general was confirmed."

"So that now——?" inquired the abbé.

"So that now," continued Caderousse, "he possesses a magnificent hotel, No. 27 Rue du Helder, Paris."

The abbé opened his mouth, remained for a moment like a man who hesitates, then, making an effort over himself, he said,—

"And Mercédès—they tell me that she has disappeared?"

"Disappeared," said Caderousse, "yes, as the sun disappears, to rise the next day with still more splendour."

"Has she made a fortune also?" inquired the abbé, with an ironical smile.

"Mercédès is at this moment one of the greatest ladies in Paris," replied Caderousse.

"Go on," said the abbé; "it seems as if I were hearing the recital of a dream. But I have seen things so extraordinary, that those you mention to me seem less astonishing."

"Mercédès was at first in the deepest despair at the

blow which deprived her of Edmond. I have told you of her attempts to propitiate M. de Villefort, her devotion to the father of Dantès. In the midst of her despair a fresh trouble overtook her. This was the departure of Fernand—of Fernand, whose crime she did not know, and whom she regarded as her brother. Fernand went, and Mercédès remained alone. Three months passed and found her all tears; no news of Edmond, no news of Fernand—nothing before her but an old man who was dying with despair. One evening, after having been seated, as was her custom, all day at the angle of two roads that lead to Marseilles from the Catalans, she returned to her home more depressed than ever; neither her lover nor her friend returned by either of these roads, and she had no intelligence of one or the other. Suddenly she heard a step she knew, turned round anxiously, the door opened, and Fernand, dressed in the uniform of a sub-lieutenant, stood before her. It was not the half that she bewailed, but it was a portion of her past life that returned to her.

"Mercédès seized Fernand's hands with a transport which he took for love, but which was only joy at being no longer alone in the world, and seeing at last a friend after long hours of solitary sorrow. And then, it must be confessed, Fernand had never been hated; he was only not precisely loved. Another possessed all Mercédès's heart; that other was absent, had disappeared, perhaps was dead. At this last idea Mercédès burst into a flood of tears, and wrung her hands in agony; but this idea, which she had always repelled before when it was suggested to her by another, came now in full force upon her mind; and then, too, old Dantès incessantly said to her, 'Our Edmond is dead; if he were not, he would return to us.' The old man died, as I have told you; had he lived, Mercédès, perchance, had not become the wife of another, for he would have been there to reproach her infidelity. Fernand saw this, and when he learned the old man's death he returned. He was now a lieutenant. At his

first coming he had not said a word of love to Mercédès; at the second he reminded her that he loved her. Mercédès begged for six months more to expect and bewail Edmond."

"So that," said the abbé, with a bitter smile, "that makes eighteen months in all. What more could the most devoted lover desire?"

"Six months afterwards," continued Caderousse, "the marriage took place in the church of Accoules."

"The very church in which she was to have married Edmond," murmured the priest; "there was only a change of bridegroom."

"Well, Mercédès was married," proceeded Caderousse; "but although in the eyes of the world she appeared calm, she nearly fainted as she passed La Réserve, where, eighteen months before, the betrothal had been celebrated with him whom she would have seen she still loved had she looked at the bottom of her heart. Fernand, more happy, but not more at his ease—for I saw at this time he was in constant dread of Edmond's return—Fernand was very anxious to get his wife away and to depart himself. There were too many dangers and recollections associated with the Catalans, and eight days after the wedding they left Marseilles."

"Did you ever see Mercédès again?" inquired the priest.

"Yes, during the war of Spain, at Perpignan, where Fernand had left her; she was attending to the education of her son."

The abbé started.

"Her son?" said he.

"Yes," replied Caderousse, "little Albert."

"But, then, to be able to instruct her child," continued the abbé, "she must have received an education herself. I understood from Edmond that she was the daughter of a simple fisherman, beautiful but uneducated."

"Oh," replied Caderousse, "did he know so little of his lovely betrothed? Mercédès might have been a

queen, sir, if the crown were to be placed on the heads of the loveliest and most intelligent. Fernand's fortune already became greater, and she became greater with his growing fortune. She learned drawing, music—everything. Besides, I believe, between ourselves, she did this in order to distract her mind, that she might forget; and she only filled her head thus in order to alleviate the weight on her heart. But now everything must be told," continued Caderousse. "No doubt fortune and honours have comforted her; she is rich, a countess, and yet——"

Caderousse paused.

"Yet what?" asked the abbé.

"Yet I am sure she is not happy," said Caderousse.

"What makes you believe this?"

"Why, when I have found myself very wretched, I have thought my old friends would perhaps assist me. So I went to Danglars, who would not even receive me. I called on Fernand, who sent me a hundred francs by his valet de chambre."

"Then you did not see either of them?"

"No; but Madame de Morcerf saw me."

"How was that?"

"As I went away a purse fell at my feet; it contained five-and-twenty louis. I raised my head quickly, and saw Mercédès, who shut the blind directly."

"And M. de Villefort?" asked the abbé.

"Oh, he was never a friend of mine; I did not know him, and I had nothing to ask of him."

"Do you not know what became of him, and the share he had in Edmond's misfortunes?".

"No. I only know that some time after having arrested him he married Mademoiselle de Saint-Méran, and soon after left Marseilles. No doubt but he has been as lucky as the rest; no doubt he is as rich as Danglars, as high in station as Fernand. I only, as you see, have remained poor, wretched, and forgotten."

"You are mistaken, my friend," replied the abbé. "God may seem sometimes to forget for a while, whilst His justice reposes, but there always comes a moment when He remembers—and behold! a proof."

As he spoke the abbé took the diamond from his pocket, and giving it to Caderousse, said,—

"Here, my friend, take this diamond; it is yours."

"What! for me only?" cried Caderousse. "Ah, sir, do not jest with me!"

"This diamond was to have been shared amongst his friends. Edmond had one friend only, and thus it cannot be divided. Take the diamond, then, and sell it; it is worth fifty thousand francs (£2,000), and I repeat my wish that this sum may suffice to release you from your wretchedness."

"Oh, sir," said Caderousse, putting out one hand timidly, and with the other wiping away the perspiration which bedewed his brow—"oh, sir, do not make a jest of the happiness or despair of a man."

"I know what happiness and what despair are, and I never make a jest of such feelings. Take it, then, but in exchange——"

Caderousse, who touched the diamond, withdrew his hand.

The abbé smiled.

"In exchange," he continued, "give me the red silk purse that M. Morrel left on old Dantès's chimney-piece, and which you tell me is still in your hands."

Caderousse, more and more astonished, went towards a large oaken cupboard, opened it, and gave the abbé a long purse of faded red silk, round which were two copper runners that had once been gilt. The abbé took it, and in return gave Caderousse the diamond.

"Oh, you are a man of God, sir," cried Caderousse; "for no one knew that Edmond had given you this diamond, and you might have kept it."

"Which," said the abbé to himself, "you would have done." The abbé rose, took his hat and gloves.

"Well," he said, "all you have told me is perfectly true, then, and I may believe it in every particular."

"See, M. l'Abbé," replied Caderousse, "in this corner is a crucifix in holy wood—here on this shelf is the gospel of my wife; open this book, and I will swear upon it with my hand on the crucifix. I will swear to you by my soul's salvation, my faith as a Christian, I have told everything to you as it occurred, and as the angel of men will tell it to the ear of God at the day of the last judgment!"

"'Tis well," said the abbé, convinced by his manner and tone that Caderousse spoke the truth. "'Tis well, and may this money profit you! Adieu! I go far from men who thus so bitterly injure each other."

The abbé with difficulty got away from the enthusiastic thanks of Caderousse, opened the door himself, got out and mounted his horse, once more saluted the innkeeper, who kept uttering his loud farewells, and then returned by the road he had travelled in coming. When Caderousse turned round, he saw behind him La Carconte, paler and trembling more than ever.

"Is, then, all that I have heard really true?" she inquired.

"What! that he has given the diamond to us only?" inquired Caderousse, half bewildered with joy.

"Yes."

"Nothing more true. See; here it is."

The woman gazed at it a moment, and then said, in a gloomy voice, "Suppose it's false?"

Caderousse started, and turned pale.

"False!" he muttered—"false! Why should that man give me a false diamond?"

"To possess your secret without paying for it, you blockhead!"

Caderousse remained for a moment aghast under the weight of such an idea.

"Oh," he said, taking up his hat, which he placed on the red handkerchief tied round his head, "we will soon learn that."

"In what way?"

"Why, it is the fair of Beaucaire; there are always jewellers from Paris there, and I will show it to them. Take care of the house, wife, and I shall be back in two hours."

Caderousse left the house in haste, and ran rapidly in a direction contrary to that which the unknown had taken.

"Fifty thousand francs!" muttered La Carconte, when left alone; "it is a large sum of money, but it is not a fortune."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PRISON REGISTER.

THE day after that on which the scene had passed on the road between Bellegarde and Beaucaire we have just related, a man of about thirty or two-and-thirty, dressed in a bright blue frock-coat, nankeen trousers, and a white waistcoat, having the appearance and accent of an Englishman, presented himself before the mayor of Marseilles.

"Sir," said he, "I am chief clerk of the house of Thomson and French of Rome. We are, and have been these ten years, connected with the house of Morrel and Son of Marseilles. We have a hundred thousand francs (£4,000) or thereabouts engaged in speculation with them, and we are a little uneasy at reports that have reached us that the firm is on the eve of ruin. I have come, therefore, express from Rome, to ask you for information as to this house."

"Sir," replied the mayor, "I know very well that during the last four or five years misfortune seems to pursue M. Morrel. He has lost four or five vessels, and suffered by three or four bankruptcies; but it is not for me, although I am a creditor myself to the amount of

ten thousand francs (£400), to give any information as to the state of his finances. Ask of me, as mayor, what is my opinion of M. Morrel, I shall say he is a man honourable to the last degree, and who has up to this time fulfilled every engagement with scrupulous punctuality. This is all I can say, sir; if you wish to learn more, address yourself to M. de Boville, the Inspector of Prisons, No. 15 Rue de Nouailles. He has, I believe, two hundred thousand francs placed in the hands of Morrel; and if there be any grounds for apprehension, as this is a greater amount than mine, you will most probably find him better informed than myself."

The Englishman seemed to appreciate this extreme delicacy, made his bow, and went away, walking with that step peculiar to the sons of Great Britain, towards the street mentioned. M. de Boville was in his private room, and the Englishman, on perceiving him, made a gesture of surprise, which seemed to indicate that it was not the first time he had been in his presence. As to M. de Boville, he was in such a state of despair that it was evident all the faculties of his mind, absorbed in the thought which occupied him at the moment, did not allow either his memory or his imagination to stray to the past. The Englishman, with the coolness of his nation, addressed him in terms nearly similar to those with which he had accosted the mayor of Marseilles.

"Oh, sir," exclaimed M. de Boville, "your fears are unfortunately but too well founded, and you see before you a man in despair. I had two hundred thousand francs placed in the hands of Morrel and Son; these two hundred thousand francs were my daughter's dowry, who was to be married in a fortnight, and these two hundred thousand francs were payable, half on the 15th of this month, and the other half on the 15th of next month. I had informed M. Morrel of my desire to have these payments punctually, and he has been here within the last half-hour to tell me that if his ship, the *Pharaon*,

did not come into port on the 15th, he would be wholly unable to make this payment."

"But," said the Englishman, "this looks very much like a suspension of payments!"

"Say, sir, that it resembles a bankruptcy!" exclaimed M. de Boville despairingly.

The Englishman appeared to reflect a moment, and then said,—

"Thus, then, sir, this credit inspires you with considerable apprehensions?"

"To say truth, I consider it lost."

"Well, then, I will buy it of you."

"You?"

"Yes, I!"

"But at a tremendous discount, of course?"

"No; for two hundred thousand francs. Our house," added the Englishman, with a laugh, "does not do things in that way."

"And you will pay——"

"Ready money."

And the Englishman drew from his pocket a bundle of bank-notes, which might have been twice the sum M. de Boville feared to lose. A ray of joy passed over M. de Boville's countenance, yet he made an effort over himself, and said,—

"Sir, I ought to tell you that, in all probability, you will not have six per cent. of this sum."

"That's no affair of mine," replied the Englishman; "that is the affair of the house of Thomson and French, in whose name I act. They have, perhaps, some motive to serve in hastening the ruin of a rival firm. But all I know, sir, is, that I am ready to hand you over this sum in exchange for your assignment of the debt. I only ask a brokerage."

"Of course, that is perfectly just," cried M. de Boville. "The commission is usually one and a half; will you have two—three—five per cent., or even more? Say!"

"Sir," replied the Englishman, laughing, "I am like my house, and do not do such things. No; the commission I ask is quite different."

"Name it, sir, I beg."

"You are the inspector of prisons?"

"I have been so these fourteen years."

"You keep the registers of entries and departures?"

"I do."

"To these registers there are added notes relative to the prisoners?"

"There are special reports on every prisoner."

"Well, sir, I was educated at Rome by a poor devil of an abbé, who disappeared suddenly. I have since learned that he was confined in the Château d'If, and I should like to learn some particulars of his death."

"What was his name?"

"The Abbé Faria."

"Oh, I recollect him perfectly," cried M. de Boville; "he was crazy."

"So they said."

"Oh, he was, decidedly."

"Very possibly; but what sort of madness was it?"

"He pretended to know of an immense treasure, and offered vast sums to government if they would liberate him."

"Poor devil! And he is dead?"

"Yes, sir; five or six months ago, last February."

"You have a good memory, sir, to recollect dates so well!"

"I recollect this, because the poor devil's death was accompanied by a singular circumstance."

"May I ask what that was?" said the Englishman, with an expression of curiosity which a close observer would have been astonished at discovering in his phlegmatic countenance.

"Oh dear, yes, sir; the abbé's dungeon was forty or fifty feet distant from that of an old agent of Bonaparte's — one of those who had the most contributed to

the return of the usurper in 1815, a very resolute and very dangerous man."

"Indeed!" said the Englishman.

"Yes," replied M. de Boville; "I myself had occasion to see this man in 1816 or 1817, and we could only go into his dungeon with a file of soldiers. That man made a deep impression on me; I shall never forget his countenance!"

The Englishman smiled imperceptibly.

"And you say, sir," he said, "that the two dungeons——"

"Were separated by a distance of fifty feet; but it appears that this Edmond Dantès——"

"This dangerous man's name was——"

"Edmond Dantès. It appears, sir, that this Edmond Dantès had procured tools, or made them, for they found a passage by which the prisoners communicated."

"This passage was formed, no doubt, with an intention of escape?"

"No doubt; but, unfortunately for the prisoners, the Abbé Faria had an attack of catalepsy, and died."

"That must have cut short the projects of escape."

"For the dead man, yes," replied M. de Boville, "but not for the survivor; on the contrary, this Dantès saw a means of accelerating his escape. He, no doubt, thought that prisoners who died in the Château d'If were interred in a burial-ground as usual, and he conveyed the dead man into his own cell, assumed his place in the sack in which they had sown up the defunct, and awaited the moment of interment."

"It was a bold step, and one that indicated some courage," remarked the Englishman.

"As I have already told you, sir, he was a very dangerous man; and, fortunately, by his own act disembarrassed the government of the fears it had on his account."

"How was that?"

"How! Do you not comprehend?"

"No."

"The Château d'If has no cemetery, and they simply throw the dead into the sea, after having fastened a thirty-six pound bullet to their feet."

"Well?" observed the Englishman, as if he were slow of comprehension.

"Well, they fastened a thirty-six pound bullet to his feet, and threw him into the sea."

"Really!" exclaimed the Englishman.

"Yes, sir," continued the inspector of prisons. "You may imagine the amazement of the fugitive when he found himself flung headlong beneath the rocks! I should like to have seen his face at this moment."

"That would have been difficult."

"No matter," replied De Boville, in supreme good-humour at the certainty of recovering his two hundred thousand francs—"no matter, I can fancy it."

And he shouted with laughter.

"So can I," said the Englishman, and he laughed too; but he laughed as the English do, at the end of his teeth.

"And so," continued the Englishman, who first regained his composure, "he was drowned?"

"Unquestionably."

"So that the governor got rid of the fierce and the crazy prisoner at the same time?"

"Precisely."

"But some official document was drawn up as to this affair, I suppose?" inquired the Englishman.

"Yes, yes, the mortuary deposition. You understand, Dantès's relations, if he had any, might have some interest in knowing if he were dead or alive."

"So that now, if there were anything to inherit from him, they may do so with easy conscience. He is dead, and no mistake about it?"

"Oh, yes; and they may have the fact attested whenever they please."

"So be it," said the Englishman. "But to return to these registers."

"True, this story has diverted our attention from them. Excuse me."

"Excuse you for what? for the story? By no means; it really seems to me very curious."

"Yes, indeed. So, sir, you wish to see all relating to the poor abbé, who really was gentleness itself."

"Yes, you will much oblige me."

"Go into my study here, and I will show it to you."

And they both entered M. de Boville's study.

All was here arranged in perfect order; each register had its number, each file of paper its place. The inspector begged the Englishman to seat himself in an armchair, and placed before him the register and documents relative to the Château d'If, giving him all the time he desired to examine it, whilst De Boville seated himself in a corner, and began to read his newspaper.

The Englishman easily found the entries relative to the Abbé Faria; but it seemed that the history which the inspector had related interested him greatly, for after having perused the first documents he turned over the leaves until he reached the deposition respecting Edmond Dantès. There he found everything arranged in due order—the denunciation, examination, Morrel's petition, M. de Villefort's marginal notes. He folded up the denunciation quietly, and put it as quietly in his pocket; read the examination, and saw that the name of Noirtier was not mentioned in it; perused, too, the application, dated 10th April 1815, in which Morrel, by the deputy-procureur's advice, exaggerated with the best intentions (for Napoleon was then on the throne) the services Dantès had rendered to the imperial cause—services which Villefort's certificates rendered indispensable. Then he saw through all. This petition to Napoleon, kept back by Villefort, had become, under the second restoration, a terrible weapon against him in the hands of the procureur du roi. He was no longer astonished, when he searched on, to find in the register this note placed in a bracket against his name:—

EDMOND DANTÈS, { An inveterate Bonapartist; took an active part in the return from the Isle of Elba.
To be kept in complete solitary confinement, and to be strictly watched and guarded.

Beneath these lines was written, in another hand,—

"See note above—nothing can be done."

He compared the writing in the bracket with the writing of the certificate placed beneath Morrel's petition, and discovered that the note in the bracket was the same writing as the certificate—that is to say, were in Villefort's handwriting.

"Thanks!" said the Englishman, closing the register with a noise. "I have all I want; now it is for me to perform my promise. Give me a simple assignment of your debt; acknowledge therein the receipt of the cash, and I will hand you over the money."

He rose, gave his seat to M. de Boville, who took it without ceremony, quickly drew out the required assignment, whilst the Englishman was counting out the bank-notes on the other side of the desk.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE HOUSE OF MORREL AND SON.

ANY one who had quitted Marseilles a few years previously well acquainted with the interior of Morrel's house, and had returned at this date, would have found a great change.

In the deserted corridor and the empty office, out of all the numerous clerks that used to fill the office but two remained. One was a young man of three or four and twenty, who was in love with M. Morrel's daughter, and had remained with him, spite of the efforts of his friends

to induce him to withdraw; the other was an old one-eyed cashier, named Coclès, a nickname given him by the young men who used to inhabit this vast beehive, now almost deserted.

Coclès remained in M. Morrel's service, and a most singular change had taken place in his situation; he had at the same time risen to the rank of cashier and sunk to the rank of a servant. He was, however, the same Coclès, good, patient, devoted, but inflexible on the subject of arithmetic, the only point on which he would have stood firm against the world, even against M. Morrel, and strong in the multiplication-table, which he had at his fingers' ends, no matter what scheme or what trap was laid to catch him. In the midst of the distress of the house, Coclès was the only one unmoved. But this did not arise from a want of affection, but, on the contrary, from a firm conviction.

Nothing had as yet occurred to shake Coclès's belief: the last month's payment had been made with the most scrupulous exactitude; Coclès had detected an error of fourteen sous to the prejudice of Morrel, and the same evening he had brought them to M. Morrel, who, with a melancholy smile, threw them into an almost empty drawer, saying,—

"Thanks, Coclès; you are the pearl of cashiers."

Coclès retired perfectly happy, for this eulogium of M. Morrel, himself the pearl of the honest men of Marseilles, flattered him more than a present of fifty pounds. But since the end of the month M. Morrel had passed many an anxious hour. In order to meet the end of the month, he had collected all his resources, and, fearing lest the report of his distress should get bruited abroad at Marseilles when he was known to be reduced to such an extremity, he went to the fair of Beaucaire to sell his wife and daughter's jewels and a portion of his plate. By this means the end of the month was passed; but his resources were now exhausted. Credit, owing to the reports afloat, was no longer to be had;

and to meet the £4,000 due on the 15th of the present month to M. de Boville, and the £4,000 due on the 15th of the next month, M. Morrel had, in reality, no hope but the return of the *Pharaon*, whose departure he had learnt from a vessel which had weighed anchor at the same time, and which had already arrived in harbour.

But this vessel, which, like the *Pharaon*, came from Calcutta, had arrived a fortnight, whilst no intelligence had been received of the *Pharaon*.

Such was the state of things when, the day after his interview with M. de Boville, the confidential clerk of the house of Thomson and French of Rome presented himself at M. Morrel's. Emmanuel received him, the young man whom every fresh visage alarmed; for each fresh visage announced a fresh creditor, who, in his alarm, came to question the head of the house. The young man, wishing to spare his employer the pain of this interview, questioned the newcomer; but the stranger declared he had nothing to say to M. Emmanuel, and that his business was with M. Morrel in person.

Emmanuel sighed, and summoned Coclès. Coclès appeared, and the young man bade him conduct the stranger to M. Morrel's apartment. Coclès went first, and the stranger followed him. On the staircase they met a beautiful girl of sixteen or seventeen, who looked with anxiety at the stranger.

"M. Morrel is in his room, is he not, Mademoiselle Julie?" said the cashier.

"Yes; I think so, at least," said the young girl hesitatingly. "Go and see, Coclès, and if my father is there, announce this gentleman."

"It will be useless to announce me, mademoiselle," returned the Englishman. "M. Morrel does not know my name. This worthy gentleman has only to announce the confidential clerk of the house of Thomson and French of Rome, with whom your father does business."

The young girl turned pale, and continued to descend, whilst the stranger and Coclès continued to mount the

staircase. She entered the office where Emmanuel was whilst Coclès, by the aid of a key he possessed, opened a door in the corner of a landing-place on the second staircase, conducted the stranger into an ante-chamber opened a second door, which he closed behind him, and after having left the clerk of the house of Thomson and French alone, returned and signed to him that he could enter.

The Englishman entered, and found Morrel seated at a table, turning over the formidable columns of his ledger, which contained the list of his liabilities. At the sight of the stranger, M. Morrel closed the ledger rose, and offered a seat to the stranger, and when he had seen him seated, resumed his own chair.

"Monsieur," said Morrel, whose uneasiness was increased by this examination, "you wish to speak to me."

"Yes, monsieur. You are aware from whom I come?"

"The house of Thomson and French; at least, so my cashier tells me."

"He has told you rightly. The house of Thomson and French had 300,000 or 400,000 francs (£12,000 to £16,000) to pay this month in France, and, knowing your strict punctuality, have collected all the bills bearing your signature, and charged me as they became due to present them, and to employ the money otherwise."

Morrel sighed deeply, and passed his hand over his forehead, which was covered with perspiration.

"So then, sir," said Morrel, "you hold bills of mine?"

"Yes, and for a considerable sum."

"What is the amount?" asked Morrel, with a voice he strove to render firm.

"Here is," said the Englishman, taking a quantity of papers from his pocket, "an assignment of 200,000 francs to our house by M. de Boville, the inspector of prisons, to whom they are due. You acknowledge, of course, you owe this sum to him?"

"Yes; he placed the money in my hands at four and a half per cent. nearly five years ago."

"When are you to pay?"

"Half the 15th of this month, half the 15th of next."

"Just so; and now here are 32,500 francs payable shortly. They are all signed by you, and assigned to our house by the holders."

"I recognize them," said Morrel, whose face was suffused as he thought that, for the first time in his life, he would be unable to honour his own signature. "Is this all?"

"No; I have for the end of the month these bills which have been assigned to us by the house of Pascal, and the house of Wild and Turner of Marseilles, amounting to nearly 55,000 francs (£2,200); in all, 287,500 francs (£11,500)."

It is impossible to describe what Morrel suffered during this enumeration.

"Two hundred and eighty-seven thousand five hundred francs," repeated he.

"Yes, sir," replied the Englishman.

"I will not," continued he, after a moment's silence, "conceal from you, that whilst your probity and exactitude up to this moment are universally acknowledged, yet the report is current in Marseilles that you are not able to meet your engagements."

At this almost brutal speech Morrel turned deathly pale.

"Sir," said he, "up to this time—and it is now more than four-and-twenty years since I received the direction of this house from my father, who had himself conducted it for five-and-thirty years—never has anything bearing the signature of Morrel and Son been dishonoured."

"I know that," replied the Englishman. "But as a man of honour should answer another, tell me fairly, shall you pay these with the same punctuality?"

Morrel shuddered, and looked at the man, who spoke with more assurance than he had hitherto shown.

"To questions frankly put," said he, "a straightforward answer should be given. Yes, I shall pay, if,

as I hope, my vessel arrives safely; for its arrival will again procure me the credit which the numerous accidents, of which I have been the victim, have deprived me; but if the *Pharaon* should be lost, and this last resource be gone——"

The poor man's eyes filled with tears.

"Well," said the other, "if this last resource fail you?"

"Well," returned Morrel, "it is a cruel thing to be forced to say, but, already used to misfortune, I must habituate myself to shame. I fear I shall be forced to suspend my payments."

"Have you no friends who could assist you?"

Morrel smiled mournfully.

"In business, sir," said he, "one has no friends, only correspondents."

"It is true," murmured the Englishman; "then you have but one hope."

"But one."

"The last?"

"The last."

"So that if this fail——"

"I am ruined—completely ruined!"

"As I came here a vessel was entering the port."

"I know it, sir. A young man, who still adheres to my fallen fortunes, passes a part of his time in a belvedere at the top of the house, in hopes of being the first to announce good news to me. He has informed me of the entrance of this ship."

"And it is not yours?"

"No; it is a vessel of Bordeaux, *La Gironde*. It comes from India also, but it is not mine."

"Perhaps it has spoken the *Pharaon*, and brings you some tidings of it?"

"Shall I tell you plainly one thing, sir? I dread almost as much to receive any tidings of my vessel as to remain in doubt. Incertitude is still hope."

Then in a low voice Morrel added,—

"This delay is not natural. The *Pharaon* left Calcutta the 5th of February; it ought to have been here a month ago."

"What is that?" said the Englishman. "What is the meaning of this noise?"

"Oh, oh!" cried Morrel, turning pale, "what is this?"

A loud noise was heard on the stairs, of people moving hastily, and half-stifled sobs. Morrel rose and advanced to the door; but his strength failed him, and he sank into a chair. The two men remained opposite one another, Morrel trembling in every limb, the stranger gazing at him with an air of profound pity. The noise had ceased; but it seemed that Morrel expected something—something had occasioned the noise, and something must follow.

The stranger fancied he heard footsteps on the stairs, and that the steps, which were those of several persons, stopped at the door. A key was inserted in the lock of the first door, and the creaking of hinges was audible.

"There are only two persons who have the key of the door," murmured Morrel, "Coclès and Julie."

At this instant the second door opened, and the young girl, her eyes bathed with tears, appeared.

Morrel rose tremblingly, supporting himself by the arm of the chair. He would have spoken, but his voice failed him.

"Oh, father!" said she, clasping her hands, "forgive your child for being the messenger of ill."

Morrel again changed colour. Julie threw herself into his arms.

"Oh, father, father!" murmured she, "courage!"

"The *Pharaon* has then perished?" said Morrel, in a hoarse voice.

The young girl did not speak, but she made an affirmative sign with her head as she lay on her father's breast.

"And the crew?" asked Morrel.

"Saved," said the girl; "saved by the crew of the vessel that has just entered the harbour."

Morrel raised his two hands to heaven with an expression of resignation and sublime gratitude.

"Thanks, my God," said he; "at least you strike but me alone."

Spite of his phlegm a tear moistened the eye of the Englishman.

"Come in, come in," said Morrel, "for I presume you are all at the door."

Scarcely had he uttered these words than Madame Morrel entered, weeping bitterly; Emmanuel followed her; and in the ante-chamber were visible the rough faces of seven or eight half-naked sailors.

At the sight of these men the Englishman started and advanced a step; then restrained himself, and retired into the farthest and most obscure corner of the apartment.

Madame Morrel sat down by her husband and took one of his hands in hers; Julie still lay with her head on his shoulder; Emmanuel stood in the centre of the chamber, and seemed to form the link between Morrel's family and the sailors at the door.

"How did this happen?" said Morrel.

"Draw nearer, Penelon," said the young man, "and relate all."

An old seaman, bronzed by the tropical sun, advanced twirling the remains of a hat between his hands.

"Good-day, M. Morrel," said he, as if he had just quitted Marseilles the previous evening, and had just returned from Aix or Toulon.

"Good-day, Penelon," returned Morrel, who could not refrain from smiling through his tears. "Where is the captain?"

"The captain, M. Morrel—he has stayed behind sick at Palma; but, please God, it won't be much, and you will see him in a few days all alive and hearty."

"Well, now tell your story, Penelon."

Penelon rolled his quid in his cheek, placed his hand before his mouth, turned his head, and sent a long je

of tobacco juice into the ante-chamber, advanced his foot, and began,—

"You see, M. Morrel," said he, "we were somewhere between Cape Blanc and Cape Bogador, sailing with a fair breeze south-south-west, after a week's calm, when Captain Gaumard comes up to me—I was at the helm, I should tell you—and says, 'Penelon, what do you think of those clouds that are arising there?'

"I was just then looking at them myself. 'What do I think, captain? Why, I think that they are rising faster than they have any business, and that they would not be so black if they did not mean mischief.'

"'That's my opinion too,' said the captain, 'and I'll take precautions accordingly. We are carrying too much canvas. Holloa! all hands to slacken sail and lower the flying jib.'

"It was time; the squall was on us, and the vessel began to heel.

"'Ah,' said the captain, 'we have still too much canvas set. All hands to lower the mainsail!' Five minutes after it was down, and we sailed under mizzen-topsails and topgallant-sails.

"'Well, Penelon,' said the captain, 'what makes you shake your head?'

"'Why,' I says, 'I don't think that we shall stop here.'

"'I think you are right,' answered he; 'we shall have a gale.'

"'A gale! more than that, we shall have a tempest, or I know nothing about it.'

"You could see the wind coming like the dust at Montredon. Luckily, the captain understood his business.

"'All hands take in two reefs in the topsails,' cried the captain; 'let go the bowlines, brace to, lower the topgallant-sails, haul out the reef-tackles on the yards.'"

"That was not enough for those latitudes," said the Englishman. "I should have taken four reefs in the topsails, and lowered the mizzen."

His firm, sonorous, and unexpected voice made every one start. Penelon put his hand over his eyes, and then stared at the man who thus criticised the manœuvres of his captain.

"We did better than that, sir," said the old sailor, with a certain respect; "we put the helm to the wind to run before the tempest; ten minutes after we struck our topsails and scudded under bare poles."

"The vessel was very old to risk that," said the Englishman.

"Eh, it was that that wrecked us. After having been tossed about for twelve hours we sprung a leak. 'Penelon,' said the captain, 'I think we are sinking. Give me the helm, and go down into the hold.'

"I gave him the helm and descended; there was already three feet water. I cried, 'All hands to the pumps!' but it was too late, and it seemed the more we pumped the more came in.

"'Ah,' said I, after four hours' work, 'since we are sinking, let us sink; we can die but once.'

"'That's the example you set, Penelon,' cries the captain; 'very well, wait a minute.'

"He went into his cabin, and came back with a brace of pistols.

"'I will blow the brains out of the first man who leaves the pump,'" said he.

"Well done!" said the Englishman.

"There's nothing gives you so much courage as good reasons," continued the sailor. "And during that time the wind had abated, and the sea gone down, but the water kept rising—not much, only two inches an hour, but still it rose. Two inches an hour does not seem much, but in twelve hours that makes two feet, and three we had before, that makes five.

"'Come,' said the captain, 'we have done all in our power, and M. Morrel will have nothing to reproach us with. We have tried to save the ship; let us now save ourselves. To the boats, my lads, as quick as you can.'

"Now," continued Penelon, "you see, M. Morrel, a sailor is attached to his ship, but still more to his life; so we did not wait to be told twice, the more so that the ship was sinking under us, and seemed to say, Get along—save yourselves.

"We soon launched the boat, and all eight of us got into it. The captain descended the last, or, rather, he did not descend, he would not quit the vessel; so I took him round the waist and threw him into the boat, and then I jumped after him. It was time, for, just as I jumped, the deck burst with a noise like the broadside of a man-of-war. Ten minutes after she pitched forward, then the other way, spun round and round, and then good-bye to the *Pharaon*. As for us, we were three days without anything to eat or drink, so that we began to think of drawing lots who should feed the rest, when we saw *La Gironde*. We made signals of distress; she perceived us, made for us, and took us all on board. There now, M. Morrel, that's the whole truth, on the honour of a sailor. Is not it true, you fellows there?"

A general murmur of approbation showed that the narrator had faithfully detailed their misfortunes and sufferings.

"Well, well," said Morrel, "I know there was no one in fault but destiny. It was the will of God that this should happen, blessed be His name. What wages are due to you?"

"Oh, don't let us talk of that, M. Morrel."

"On the contrary, let us speak of it."

"Well, then, three months," said Penelon.

"Coclès, pay 200 francs to each of these good fellows," said Morrel. "At another time," added he, "I should have said, Give them, besides, 200 francs over as a present; but times are changed, and the little money that remains to me is not my own."

Penelon turned to his companions, and exchanged a few words with them.

"As for that, M. Morrel," said he, again turning his quid. "As for that——"

"As for what?"

"The money."

"Well——"

"Well, we all say that 50 francs will be enough for us at present, and that we will wait for the rest."

"Thanks, my friends, thanks!" cried Morrel, gratefully. "Take it—take it; and if you can find another employer, enter his service: you are free to do so."

These last words produced a prodigious effect on the seamen. Penelon nearly swallowed his quid; fortunately he recovered.

"What! M. Morrel," said he, in a low voice; "you send us away. You are then angry with us?"

"No, no," said M. Morrel, "I am not angry; on the contrary. I do not send you away; but I have no more ships, and therefore I do not want any sailors."

"No more ships!" returned Penelon. "Well, then, you'll build some; we'll wait for you."

"I have no money to build ships with, Penelon," said the poor owner mournfully, "so I cannot accept your kind offer."

"No more money! Then you must not pay us; we can go, like the *Pharaon*, under bare poles."

"Enough! enough!" cried Morrel, almost overpowered. "Leave me, I pray you; we shall meet again in a happier time.—Emmanuel, accompany them, and see that my orders are executed."

"At least, we shall see each other again, M. Morrel?" asked Penelon.

"Yes; I hope so, at least. Now go."

He made a sign to Coclès, who marched first; the seamen followed him, and Emmanuel brought up the rear.

"Now," said the owner to his wife and daughter, "leave me; I wish to speak with this gentleman."

And he glanced towards the clerk of Thomson and French, who had remained motionless in the corner

during this scene, in which he had taken no part, except the few words we have mentioned. The two females looked at this person, whose presence they had entirely forgotten, and retired; but as she left the apartment Julie gave the stranger a supplicating glance, to which he replied by a smile that an indifferent spectator would have been surprised to see on his stern features.

The two men were left alone.

"Well, sir," said Morrel, sinking into a chair, "you have heard all, and I have nothing further to tell you."

"I see," returned the Englishman, "that a fresh and unmerited misfortune has overwhelmed you, and this only increases my desire to serve you."

"Oh, sir!" cried Morrel.

"Let me see," continued the stranger, "I am one of your largest creditors."

"Your bills, at least, are the first that will fall due."

"Do you wish for time to pay?"

"A delay would save my honour, and, consequently, my life."

"How long a delay do you wish for?"

Morrel reflected.

"Two months," said he.

"I will give you three," replied the stranger.

"But," asked Morrel, "will the house of Thomson and French consent?"

"Oh, I take everything on myself. To-day is the 5th of June."

"Yes."

"Well, renew these bills up to the 5th of September; and on the 5th of September, at eleven o'clock (the hand of the clock pointed to eleven), I shall come to receive the money."

"I shall expect you," returned Morrel, "and I will pay you—or I shall be dead."

These last words were uttered in so low a tone that the stranger could not hear them. The bills were renewed, the old ones destroyed, and the poor shipowner

found himself with three months before him to collect his resources. The Englishman received his thanks with the phlegm peculiar to his nation, and Morrel, overwhelming him with grateful blessings, conducted him to the staircase.

The stranger met Julie on the stairs. She affected to be descending, but in reality she was waiting for him.

"Oh, sir——" said she, clasping her hands.

"Mademoiselle," said the stranger, "one day you will receive a letter, signed 'Sinbad the Sailor.' Do exactly what the letter bids you, however strange it may appear."

"Yes, sir," returned Julie.

"Do you promise?"

"I swear to you I will."

"It is well. Adieu, mademoiselle. Remain as pure and virtuous as you are at present, and I have great hopes that Heaven will reward you by giving you Emmanuel for a husband."

Julie uttered a faint cry, blushed like a rose, and leaned against the baluster.

The stranger waved his hand, and continued to descend. In the court he found Penelon, who, with a rouleau of a hundred francs in either hand, seemed unable to make up his mind to retain them.

"Come with me, my friend," said the Englishman. "I wish to speak to you."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FIFTH OF SEPTEMBER.

THE delay afforded by the agent of the house of Thomson and French, at the moment when Morrel expected it least, appeared to the poor shipowner one of those returns of good fortune which announce to a man that Fate is at length weary of wasting her spite upon him.

The same day he related to his wife, to Emmanuel and his daughter, what had occurred to him; and a ray of hope, if not tranquillity, returned to the family. Unfortunately, however, Morrel had not only engagements with the house of Thomson and French, who had shown themselves so considerate towards him; and, as he had said, in business he had correspondents, and not friends. The bills signed by Morrel were presented at his office with scrupulous exactitude, and, thanks to the delay granted by the Englishman, were paid by Coclès with equal punctuality. Coclès thus remained in his accustomed tranquillity. It was Morrel alone who remembered with alarm that if he had to repay on the 15th the 200,000 francs of M. de Boville, and on the 30th the 32,500 francs of bills, for which, as well as the debt due to the inspector of prisons, he had time granted, he must be a ruined man.

The opinion of all the commercial men was, that under the reverses which had successively weighed down Morrel, it was impossible for him to stand against it. Great, therefore, was the astonishment when they saw the end of the month come, and he fulfil all his engagements with his usual punctuality. Still, confidence was not restored to all minds, and the general voice postponed only until the end of the month the complete ruin of the unfortunate shipowner. The month passed amidst unheard-of efforts on the part of Morrel to get in all his resources. Formerly, his paper at any date was taken with confidence, and was even in request. Morrel now tried to negotiate bills at ninety days only, and found all the banks closed. Fortunately Morrel had some moneys coming in on which he could rely; and as they reached him, he found himself in a condition to meet his engagements when the end of July came.

The agent of Thomson and French had not been again seen at Marseilles. The day after, or two days after, his visit to Morrel, he had disappeared; and as in that city he had had no intercourse but with the mayor, the

inspector of prisons, and M. Morrel, his appearance left no other trace than the different remembrances of him which these three persons retained. As to the sailors of the *Pharaon*, it seemed that they must have found some engagement, for they had disappeared also.

Captain Gaumard, recovered from his illness, had returned from Palma. He hesitated to present himself at Morrel's, but the owner, hearing of his arrival, went to him. The worthy shipowner knew, from Penelon's recital, of the captain's brave conduct during the storm, and tried to console him. He brought him also the amount of his wages, which Captain Gaumard had not dared to apply for. As he descended the staircase, Morrel met Penelon, who was going up. Penelon had, it would seem, made good use of his money, for he was newly clad. When he saw his employer, the worthy tar seemed much embarrassed, drew on one side into the corner of the landing-place, passed his quid from one cheek to the other, stared stupidly with his great eyes, and only acknowledged the squeeze of the hand which Morrel as usual gave him by a slight pressure in return. Morrel attributed Penelon's embarrassment to the elegance of his attire: it was evident the good fellow had not gone to such an expense on his own account; he was, no doubt, engaged on board some other vessel, and thus his bashfulness arose from the fact of his not having, if we may so express ourselves, worn mourning for the *Pharaon* longer. Perhaps he had come to tell Captain Gaumard of his good luck, and to offer him employment from his new master.

"Worthy fellow!" said Morrel, as he went away. "May your new master love you as I loved you, and be more fortunate than I have been!"

August rolled by in unceasing efforts on the part of Morrel to renew his credit or revive the old. On the 20th of August it was known at Marseilles that he had taken a place in the *malle-poste*, and then it was said that it was at the end of the month the docket was

to be struck, and Morrel had gone away before, that he might not be present at this cruel act, but had left his chief clerk Emmanuel and his cashier Coclès to meet it. But, contrary to all expectation, when the 31st of August came, the house opened as usual, and Coclès appeared behind the grating of the counter, examined with the same scrutiny all bills presented, and from first to last paid all with the same precision. There came in, moreover, two repayments which M. Morrel had anticipated, and which Coclès paid as punctually as those bills which the shipowner had accepted. All this was incomprehensible; and then, with the tenacity peculiar to prophets of bad news, the failure was put off until the end of September.

On the 1st Morrel returned. He was awaited by his family with extreme anxiety, for from this journey to Paris they hoped a last means of safety would arrive. Morrel had thought of Danglars, who was now immensely rich, and had lain under great obligations to Morrel in former days, since to him it was owing that Danglars entered the service of the Spanish banker, with whom had commenced his vast wealth. It was said at this moment that Danglars was worth from £200,000 to £300,000, and had unlimited credit. Danglars, then, without taking a crown from his pocket, could save Morrel; he had but to pass his word for a loan, and Morrel was saved. Morrel had long thought of Danglars; but there are those instinctive revoltings impossible to control, and Morrel had delayed as long as possible before he had recourse to this last resource. And Morrel was right, for he returned home borne down by all the humiliation of a refusal. Yet, on his arrival, Morrel did not utter a complaint, nor say one harsh word; he embraced his weeping wife and daughter, pressed Emmanuel's hand with friendly warmth, and then going to his private room on the second floor, had sent for Coclès.

"Then," said the two females to Emmanuel, "we are, indeed, ruined."

It was agreed, in a brief council held amongst them, that Julie should write to her brother, who was in garrison at Nismes, to come to them as speedily as possible. The poor woman felt instinctively that they required all their strength to support the blow that impended. Besides, Maximilian Morrel, though hardly two-and-twenty, had great influence over his father. He was a strong-minded, upright young man. At the time when he decided on his profession his father had no desire to choose for him, but had consulted young Maximilian's taste. He had at once declared for a military life, and had in consequence studied hard, passed brilliantly through the Ecole Polytechnique, and left it as sub-lieutenant of the 53rd of the line. For a year he had held his rank, and expected promotion on the first vacancy.

Morrel examined the ledgers, opened the pocket-book, and counted the money. All his funds amounted to 6,000 or 8,000 francs, his expectancies up to the 5th to 4,000 or 5,000, which, making the best of everything, gave him 14,000 francs to meet bills amounting to 287,500 francs. He could not make such a proposal. However, when Morrel went down to his dinner, he appeared very composed. This calmness was the more alarming to the two women than the deepest dejection would have been. After dinner Morrel usually went out, and used to take his coffee at the club of the Phocéens, and read the *Semaphore;* but this day he did not leave the house, but returned to his office.

As to Coclès, he seemed completely bewildered. For part of the day he went into the courtyard, seated himself on a stone with his head bare, and exposed to a sun of thirty degrees.

Night came. The two women had watched, hoping that when he left his room Morrel would come to them; but they heard him pass before their door, and trying to conceal the noise of his footsteps. They listened. He went into his sleeping-room, and fastened the door

inside. Madame Morrel sent her daughter to bed, and half an hour after Julie had retired she rose, took off her shoes, and went stealthily along the passage to see through the keyhole what her husband was doing. In the passage she saw a retreating shadow; it was Julie, who, uneasy herself, had anticipated her mother. The young lady went towards Madame Morrel.

"He is writing," she said.

They had understood each other without speaking. Madame Morrel looked again through the keyhole. Morrel was writing; but Madame Morrel remarked, what her daughter had not observed, that her husband was writing on stamped paper. The terrible idea that he was writing his will flashed across her; she shuddered, and yet had not strength to utter a word.

Next day M. Morrel seemed as calm as ever, went into his office as usual, came to his breakfast punctually, and then, after dinner, he placed his daughter beside him, took her head in his arms, and held her for a long time against his bosom. In the evening Julie told her mother that, although so calm in appearance, she had remarked that her father's heart beat violently.

The two next days passed almost similarly. On the evening of the 4th of September M. Morrel asked his daughter for the key of his cabinet. Julie trembled at this request, which seemed to her of bad omen. Why did her father ask for this key, which she always kept, and which was only taken from her in childhood as a punishment? The young girl looked at Morrel.

"What have I done wrong, father," she said, "that you should take this key from me?"

"Nothing, my dear," replied the unhappy man, the tears starting to his eyes at this simple question—"nothing; only I want it."

Julie made a pretence to feel for the key.

"I must have left it in my room," she said.

And she went out; but, instead of going to her apartment, she hastened to consult Emmanuel.

"Do not give this key to your father," said he, "and to-morrow morning, if possible, do not quit him for a moment."

She questioned Emmanuel, but he knew nothing, or would not say it if he did.

During the night, between the 4th and 5th of September, Madame Morrel remained listening for every sound, and until three o'clock in the morning she heard her husband pacing the room in great agitation. It was three o'clock when he threw himself on the bed. The mother and daughter passed the night together. They had expected Maximilian since the previous evening. At eight o'clock in the morning Morrel entered their chamber. He was calm; but the agitation of the night was legible in his pale and careworn visage. They did not dare to ask him how he had slept.

Morrel was kinder to his wife, more affectionate to his daughter, than he had ever been. He could not cease gazing at and kissing the sweet girl. Julie, mindful of Emmanuel's request, was following her father when he quitted the room, but he said to her, quickly,—

"Remain with your mother, dearest."

Julie wished to accompany him.

"I wish you to do so," he said.

This was the first time Morrel had ever so spoken, but he said it in a tone of paternal kindness, and Julie did not dare refuse compliance. She remained at the same spot, standing mute and motionless. An instant afterwards the door opened, she felt two arms encircle her, and a mouth pressed her forehead. She looked up, and uttered an exclamation of joy.

"Maximilian! my dearest brother!" she cried.

At these words Madame Morrel rose, and threw herself into her son's arms.

"Mother," said the young man, looking alternately at Madame Morrel and her daughter, "what has occurred—what has happened? Your letter has frightened me, and I have come hither with all speed."

"Julie," said Madame Morrel, making a sign to the young man, "go and tell your father that Maximilian has just arrived."

The young lady rushed out of the apartment, but on the first step of the staircase she found a man holding a letter in his hand.

"Are you not Mademoiselle Julie Morrel?" inquired the man, with a strong Italian accent.

"Yes, sir," replied Julie, with hesitation. "What is your pleasure? I do not know you."

"Read this letter," he said, handing it to her.

Julie hesitated.

"It concerns the best interests of your father," said the messenger.

The young girl hastily took the letter from him. She opened it quickly, and read,—

"Go this moment to the Allées de Meillan, enter the house No. 15, ask the porter for the key of the room on the fifth floor, enter the apartment, take from the corner of the mantelpiece a purse netted in red silk, and give it to your father. It is important that he should receive it before eleven o'clock. You promised to obey me implicitly. Remember your oath.

"SINBAD THE SAILOR."

The young girl uttered a joyful cry, raised her eyes, looked round to question the messenger, but he had disappeared. She cast her eyes again over the note to peruse it a second time, and saw there was a postscript. She read,—

"It is important that you should fulfil this mission in person and alone; if you go accompanied by any other person, or should any one else present themselves, the porter will reply that he does not know anything about it."

This postscript was a great check to the young girl's

joy. Was there nothing to fear? Was there not some snare laid for her? Her innocence had kept her in ignorance of the dangers that might assail a young girl of her age; but there is no need to know danger in order to fear it: indeed, it may be observed, that it is usually unknown perils that inspire the greatest terror.

Julie hesitated, and resolved to take counsel. Yet, by a singular feeling, it was neither to her mother nor her brother that she applied, but to Emmanuel.

She hastened down and told him what had occurred on the day when the agent of the house of Thomson and French had come to her father's, related the scene on the staircase, repeated the promise she had made, and showed him the letter.

"You must go, then, mademoiselle," said Emmanuel.

"Go there!" murmured Julie.

"Yes. I will accompany you."

"But did you not read that I must be alone?' said Julie.

"And you shall be alone," replied the young man. "I will await you at the corner of the Rue du Musée, and if you are so long absent as to make me uneasy, I will hasten to rejoin you, and woe to him of whom you shall have cause to complain to me!"

"Then, Emmanuel," said the young girl, with hesitation, "it is your opinion that I should obey this invitation?"

"Yes. Did not the messenger say your father's safety was in it?"

"But what danger threatens him, then, Emmanuel?" she asked.

Emmanuel hesitated a moment, but his desire to make Julie decide immediately made him reply,—

"Listen," he said. "To-day is the 5th of September, is it not?"

"Yes."

"To-day, then, at eleven o'clock, your father has nearly 300,000 francs to pay."

"Yes; we know that."

"Well, then," continued Emmanuel, "we have not 15,000 francs in the house."

"What will happen then?"

"Why, if to-day before eleven o'clock your father has not found some one who will come to his aid, he will be compelled at twelve o'clock to declare himself a bankrupt."

"Oh, come, then, come!" cried she, hastening away with the young man.

During this time Madame Morrel had told her son everything. The young man knew quite well that, after the succession of misfortunes which had befallen his father, great changes had taken place in the style of living and housekeeping, but he did not know that matters had reached such a point. He was thunderstruck. Then, rushing hastily out of the apartment, he ran upstairs, expecting to find his father in his cabinet; but he rapped there in vain. Whilst he was yet at the door of the cabinet he heard the bedroom door open, turned, and saw his father. Instead of going direct to his cabinet, M. Morrel had returned to his bedchamber, which he was only this moment quitting.

Morrel uttered a cry of surprise at the sight of his son, of whose arrival he was ignorant. He remained motionless on the spot, pressing with his left hand something he had concealed under his coat. Maximilian sprang down the staircase, and threw his arms round his father's neck; but suddenly he recoiled, and placed his right hand on Morrel's breast.

"Father!" he exclaimed, turning pale as death, "what are you going to do with the brace of pistols under your coat?"

"Oh, this is what I feared!" said Morrel.

"Father, father! in Heaven's name," exclaimed the young man, "what are these weapons for?"

"Maximilian," replied Morrel, looking fixedly at his son, "you are a man, and a man of honour. Come, and I will explain to you."

And with a firm step Morrel went up to his cabinet, whilst Maximilian followed him, trembling as he went. Morrel opened the door, and closed it behind his son; then, crossing the anteroom, went to his desk, on which he placed the pistols, and pointed with his finger to an open ledger. In this ledger was made out an exact balance-sheet of affairs. Morrel had to pay, within half an hour, 287,500 francs. All he possessed was 15,257 francs.

"Read!" said Morrel.

The young man was overwhelmed as he read. Morrel said not a word. What could he say? What need he add to such a desperate proof in figures?

"And have you done all that is possible, father, to meet this disastrous result?" asked the young man, after a moment's pause.

"I have," replied Morrel.

"You have no money coming in on which you can rely?"

"None."

"You have exhausted every resource?"

"All."

"And in half an hour," said Maximilian, in a gloomy voice, "our name is dishonoured!"

"Blood washes out dishonour," said Morrel.

"You are right, father; I understand you."

Then extending his hand towards one of the pistols, he said,—

"There is one for you and one for me—thanks!"

Morrel checked his hand.

"Your mother—your sister! Who will support them?"

A shudder ran through the young man's frame.

"Father," he said, "do you reflect that you are bidding me to live?"

"Yes, I do bid you," answered Morrel; "it is your duty. You have a calm, strong mind, Maximilian. Maximilian, you are no ordinary man. I desire noth-

ing—I command nothing. I only say to you, examine my position as if it were your own, and then judge for yourself."

The young man reflected an instant, then an expression of sublime resignation appeared in his eyes, and, with a slow and sad gesture, he took off his two epaulettes, the marks of his rank.

"Be it so, then, my father," he said, extending his hand to Morrel; "die in peace, my father. I will live."

Morrel was about to cast himself on his knees before his son, but Maximilian caught him in his arms, and those two noble hearts were pressed against each other for a moment.

"You know it is not my fault?" said Morrel.

Maximilian smiled.

"I know, father, you are the most honourable man I have ever known."

"Good, my son; and now all is said. Go now and rejoin your mother and sister."

"My father, my father!" cried the young man, "why should you not live?"

"If I live, all would be changed; if I live, interest would be converted into doubt, pity into hostility; if I live, I am only a man who has broken his word, failed in his engagements—in fact, only a bankrupt. If, on the contrary, I die, remember, Maximilian, my corpse is that of an honest but unfortunate man. Living, my best friends would avoid my house; dead, all Marseilles will follow me in tears to my last home. Living, you would feel shame at my name; dead, you may raise your head and say, 'I am the son of him you killed, because, for the first time, he has been compelled to fail in his word.'"

The young man uttered a groan, but appeared resigned.

"And now," said Morrel, "leave me alone, and endeavour to keep your mother and sister away."

"Will you not see my sister once more?" asked Maximilian.

A last but final hope was concealed by the young man in the effect of this interview, and therefore he had suggested it.

Morrel shook his head.

"I saw her this morning, and bade her adieu."

"Have you no particular commands to leave with me, my father?" inquired Maximilian in a faltering voice.

"Yes, my son, and a sacred command."

"Say it, my father."

"The house of Thomson and French is the only one who, from humanity, or it may be selfishness—it is not for me to read men's hearts—have had any pity for me. His agent, who will in ten minutes present himself to receive the amount of a bill of 287,500 francs, I will not say granted, but offered me three months. Let this house be the first repaid, my son, and respect this man."

"Father, I will," said Maximilian.

"And now once more adieu," said Morrel. "Go, leave me; I would be alone. You will find my will in the secrétaire in my bed-room."

The young man remained standing and motionless, having but the force of will, and not the power of execution.

"Hear me, Maximilian," said his father. "'Suppose I was a soldier like you, and ordered to carry a certain redoubt, and you knew I must be killed in the assault, would you not say to me as you said just now, 'Go, father, for you are dishonoured by delay, and death is preferable to shame!'"

"Yes, yes!" said the young man—"yes;" and once again embracing his father with convulsive pressure, he said, "Be it so, my father."

And he rushed out of the cabinet.

When his son had left him, Morrel remained an instant standing with his eyes fixed on the door; then putting forth his arm, he pulled the bell.

After a moment's interval, Coclès appeared.

It was no longer the same man—the fearful convictions of the three last days had crushed him. This thought—the house of Morrel is about to stop payment—bent him to the earth more than twenty years would otherwise have done.

"My worthy Coclès," said Morrel, in a tone impossible to describe, "do you remain in the antechamber. When the gentleman who came three months ago—the agent of the house of Thomson and French—arrives, announce his arrival to me."

Coclès made no reply. He made a sign with his head, went into the anteroom, and seated himself.

Morrel fell back in his chair, his eyes fixed on the clock; there were seven minutes left, that was all. The hand moved on with incredible rapidity; it seemed to him as if he saw it progress.

The clock hand moved on: the pistols were cocked; he stretched forth his hand, took one up, and murmured his daughter's name.

Then he laid down the mortal weapon, took up his pen, and wrote a few words. It seemed to him as if he had not taken a sufficient farewell of his beloved daughter.

Then he turned again to the clock. He no longer counted by minutes, but by seconds. He took up the deadly weapon again, his mouth half opened and his eyes fixed on the clock, and then shuddered at the click of the trigger as he cocked the pistol.

At this moment of mortal agony, a damp colder than death passed over his brow, an agony stronger than death clutched at his heart-strings.

He heard the door of the staircase creak on its hinges. The clock gave its warning to strike eleven. The door of his cabinet opened. Morrel did not turn round; he expected these words of Coclès,

"The agent of Thomson and French."

He placed the muzzle of the pistol between his teeth.

Suddenly he herd a cry; it was his daughter's voice. He turned and saw Julie; the pistol fell from his hands.

"My father!" cried the young girl, out of breath, and half dead with joy. "Saved!—you are saved!" And she threw herself into his arms, holding in her extended hand a red netted silk purse.

"Saved, my child!" said Morrel. "What do you mean?"

"Yes, saved, saved! See, see!" said the young girl.

Morrel took the purse, and started as he did so, for a vague remembrance reminded him that it once belonged to himself. At one end was the bill for the 287,500 francs *receipted;* at the other was a diamond as large as a hazel-nut, with these words on a small slip of parchment,—

"JULIE'S DOWRY."

Morrel passed his hand over his brow; it seemed to him a dream. At this moment the clock struck eleven. The sound vibrated as if each stroke of the hammer struck on Morrel's heart.

"Explain, my child," he said, "explain: where did you find this purse?"

"In a house in the Allées de Meillan, No. 15, on the corner of a mantelpiece, in a small room on the fifth floor."

"But," cried Morrel, "this purse is not yours!"

Julie handed to her father the letter she had received in the morning.

"And did you go alone?" asked Morrel, after he had read it.

"Emmanuel accompanied me, father. He was to have waited for me at the corner of the Rue de Musée; but, strange to say, he was not there when I returned."

"Monsieur Morrel!" exclaimed a voice on the stairs; "Monsieur Morrel!"

"It is his voice!" said Julie.

At this moment Emmanuel entered, his countenance full of animation and joy.

"The *Pharaon!*" he cried; "the *Pharaon!*"

"What!—what! the *Pharaon!* Are you mad, Emmanuel? You know the vessel is lost."

"The *Pharaon*, sir—they signal the *Pharaon!* The *Pharaon* is entering the harbour!"

Morrel fell back on his chair; his strength was failing him: his understanding, weakened by such events, refused to comprehend such incredible, unheard-of, fabulous facts.

But his son came in.

"Father!" cried Maximilian, "how could you say the *Pharaon* was lost? The watch-tower has signalled her, and they say she is now coming into port."

"My dear friends," said Morrel, "if this were so, it must be a miracle of Heaven! Impossible! impossible!"

But what was real and not less incredible was the purse he held in his hand; the acceptance receipted—the splendid diamond.

"Ah, sir," exclaimed Coclès, "what can it mean—the *Pharaon?*"

"Come, my dears," said Morrel, rising from his seat, "let us go and see, and Heaven have pity upon us if it be false intelligence."

They all went out, and on the stairs met Madame Morrel, who had been afraid to go up into the cabinet. In an instant they were at the Cannebière. There was a crowd on the pier. All the crowd gave way before Morrel.

"The *Pharaon!* the *Pharaon!*" said every voice.

And, wonderful to say, in front of the tower of Saint-Jean was a ship bearing on her stern these words, printed in white letters, "The *Pharaon*, Morrel and Son of Marseilles." It was precisely resembling the other *Pharaon*, and loaded, as that had been, with cochineal and indigo. It cast anchor, brailed all sails, and on the

deck was Captain Gaumard giving orders, and Maître Penelon making signals to M. Morrel.

To doubt any longer was impossible; there was the evidence of the senses, and ten thousand persons who came to corroborate the testimony.

As Morrel and his son embraced on the pierhead, in the presence and applause of the whole city witnessing this prodigy, a man with his face half covered by a black beard, and who, concealed behind the sentry-box, watched the scene with delight, uttered these words in a low tone, "Be happy, noble heart, be blessed for all the good thou hast done and wilt do hereafter, and let my gratitude rest in the shade with your kindness."

And, with a smile in which joy and happiness were revealed, he left his hiding-place, and, without being observed, descended one of those flights of steps which serve for debarkation, and hailing three times, shouted, "Jacopo! Jacopo! Jacopo!"

Then a shallop came to shore, took him on board, and conveyed him to a yacht splendidly fitted up, on whose deck he sprung with the activity of a sailor; thence he once again looked towards Morrel, who, weeping with joy, was shaking hands most cordially with all the crowd around him, and thanking with a look the unknown benefactor whom he seemed to be seeking in the skies.

"And now," said the unknown, "farewell kindness, humanity, and gratitude! Farewell to all the feelings that expand the heart! I have been Heaven's substitute to recompense the good; now the God of vengeance yields to me His power to punish the wicked!"

At these words he gave a signal, and, as if only awaiting this signal, the yacht instantly put out to sea.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ITALY: SINBAD THE SAILOR.

TOWARDS the commencement of the year 1838, two young men belonging to the first society of Paris, the Viscount Albert de Morcerf and the Baron Franz d'Epinay, were at Florence. They had agreed to see the carnival at Rome that year, and that Franz, who for the last three or four years had inhabited Italy, should act as cicerone to Albert.

As it is no inconsiderable affair to spend the carnival at Rome, especially when you have no great desire to sleep on the Place du Peuple, or the Campo Vaccino, they wrote to Maître Pastrini, the proprietor of the Hôtel de Londres, Place d'Espagne, to reserve comfortable apartments for them. Maître Pastrini replied that he had only two rooms and a cabinet *al secondo piano*, which he offered at the low charge of a louis per diem. They accepted his offer; but wishing to make the best use of the time that was left, Albert started for Naples. As for Franz, he remained at Florence. After having passed several days here, when he had walked in the Eden called the Casines, when he had passed two or three evenings at the houses of the nobles of Florence, he took a fancy into his head, after having already visited Corsica, the cradle of Bonaparte, to visit Elba, the halting-place of Napoleon.

One evening he loosened a bark from the iron ring that secured it to the port of Leghorn, laid himself down, wrapped in his cloak, at the bottom, and said to the crew,—

"To the Isle of Elba."

The bark shot out of the harbour like a bird, and the next morning Franz disembarked at Porto-Ferrajo. He traversed the island, after having followed the traces which the footsteps of the giant have left, and re-em-

barked for Marciana. Two hours after he again landed at Pianosa, where he was assured red partridges abounded. The sport was bad; Franz only succeeded in killing a few partridges, and, like every unsuccessful sportsman, he returned to the boat very much out of temper.

"Ah, if your excellency chose," said the captain, "you might have capital sport."

"Where?"

"Do you see that island?" continued the captain, pointing to a conical pile that "rose from out the azure main."

"Well, what is this island?"

"The island of Monte-Cristo."

"But I have no permission to shoot over this island."

"Your excellency does not require a permission, for the island is uninhabited."

"Ah, indeed!" said the young man. "A desert island in the midst of the Mediterranean must be a curiosity."

"It is very natural. This isle is a mass of rocks, and does not contain an acre of land capable of cultivation."

"To whom does this island belong?"

"To Tuscany."

"What game shall I find there?"

"Thousands of wild goats."

"Who live upon the stones, I suppose," said Franz, with an incredulous smile.

"No, but by browsing the shrubs and trees that grow out of the crevices of the rocks."

"Where can I sleep?"

"On shore in the grottos, or on board in your cloak. Besides, if your excellency pleases, we can leave as soon as the chase is finished; we can sail as well by night as by day, and if the wind drops we can use our oars."

As Franz had sufficient time, and besides had no longer his apartments at Rome to seek after, he accepted the

proposition. Upon his answer in the affirmative, the sailors exchanged a few words together in a low tone.

"Well?" asked he; "what! is there any difficulty to be surmounted?"

"No," replied the captain, "but we must warn your excellency that the island is contumacious."

"What do you mean?"

"That Monte-Cristo, although uninhabited, yet serves occasionally as a refuge for the smugglers and pirates who come from Corsica, Sardinia, and Africa, and that if anything betrays that we have been there, we shall have to perform quarantine for six days on our return to Leghorn."

"The devil! That is quite another thing; rather a long time, too."

"But who will say your excellency has been to Monte-Cristo?"

"Oh, I shall not," cried Franz.

"Nor I, nor I," chorused the sailors.

"Then steer for Monte-Cristo."

The captain gave his orders, the helm was put up, and the bark was soon sailing in the direction of the island.

The wind blew strongly, the bark sailed six or seven knots an hour, and they were rapidly reaching the end of their voyage. They were within fifteen miles of Monte-Cristo when the sun began to set behind Corsica, whose mountains appeared against the sky, and showing their rugged peaks in bold relief. Then the shadow gradually covered the summit as it had covered the base, and the isle now only appeared to be a gray mountain that grew continually darker; half an hour after, and the night was quite dark.

Fortunately, the mariners were used to these latitudes, and knew every rock in the Tuscan Archipelago; for in the midst of this obscurity Franz was not without uneasiness—Corsica had long since disappeared, and Monte-Cristo itself was invisible; but the sailors seemed, like

the lynx, to see in the dark, and the pilot who steered did not evince the slightest hesitation.

An hour had passed since the sun had set, when Franz fancied he saw, at a quarter of a mile to the left, a dark mass; but it was impossible to make out what it was, and fearing to excite the mirth of the sailors by mistaking a floating cloud for land, he remained silent. Suddenly a great light appeared on the strand; land might resemble a cloud, but the fire was not a meteor.

"What is this light?" asked he.

"Silence!" said Gaetano, the captain. "It is a fire."

"But you told me the isle was uninhabited?"

"I said there were no fixed habitations on it, but I said also that it served sometimes as a harbour for smugglers."

"And for pirates?"

"And for pirates," returned Gaetano, repeating Franz's words. "It is for that reason I have given orders to pass the isle, for, as you see, the fire is behind us."

"But this fire?" continued Franz. "It seems to me rather to assure than alarm us. Men who did not wish to be seen would not light a fire."

"Oh, that goes for nothing," said Gaetano. "If you can guess the position of the isle in the darkness, you will see that the fire cannot be seen from the side, or from Pianosa, but only from the sea."

"You think, then, that this fire announces unwelcome neighbours?"

"That is what we must ascertain," returned Gaetano, fixing his eyes on this terrestrial star.

"How can you ascertain?"

"You shall see."

Gaetano consulted with his companions, and after five minutes' discussion a manœuvre was executed which caused the vessel to tack about. They returned the way they had come, and in a few minutes the fire disappeared hidden by a rise in the land.

The pilot again changed the course of the little bark

which rapidly approached the isle, and was soon within fifty paces of it. Gaetano lowered the sail, and the bark remained stationary. All this was done in silence, and since their course had been changed not a word was spoken.

Gaetano, who had proposed the expedition, had taken all the responsibility on himself. The four sailors fixed their eyes on him, whilst they prepared their oars and held themselves in readiness to row away, which, thanks to the darkness, would not be difficult. As for Franz, he examined his arms with the utmost coolness. He had two double-barrelled guns and a rifle; he loaded them, looked at the locks, and waited quietly.

During this time the captain had thrown off his vest and shirt, and secured his trousers round his waist; his feet were naked, so he had no shoes and stockings to take off; after these preparations he placed his finger on his lips, and lowering himself noiselessly into the sea swam towards the shore with such precaution that it was impossible to hear the slightest sound; he could only be traced by the phosphorescent line in his wake. This track soon disappeared; it was evident that he had touched the shore. Every one on board remained motionless during half an hour, when the same luminous track was again observed, and in two strokes he had regained the bark.

"Well!" exclaimed Franz and the sailors all together.

"They are Spanish smugglers," said he; "they have with them two Corsican bandits."

"And what are these Corsican bandits doing here with Spanish smugglers?"

"Alas!" returned the captain, with an accent of the most profound pity, "we ought always to help one another. Very often the bandits are hard pressed by gendarmes or carabineers: well, they see a bark, and good fellows like us on board; they come and demand hospitality of us; you can't refuse help to a poor hunted devil; we receive them, and for greater security we stand

out to sea. This costs us nothing, and saves the life, or at least the liberty, of a fellow-creature, who on the first occasion returns the service by pointing out some safe spot where we can land our goods without interruption."

"Ah!" said Franz, "then you are a smuggler occasionally, Gaetano?"

"Your excellency, we must live somehow," returned the other, smiling in a way impossible to describe.

"Then you know the men who are now on Monte-Cristo?"

"Oh, yes; we sailors are like freemasons, and recognize each other by signs."

"And do you think we have nothing to fear if we land?"

"Nothing at all! Smugglers are not thieves."

"But those two Corsican bandits?" said Franz, calculating the chances of peril.

"It is not their faults that they are bandits, but that of the authorities."

"How so?"

"Because they are pursued for having made a *peau*, as if it was not in a Corsican's nature to revenge himself."

"What do you mean by having made a *peau*?—having assassinated a man?" said Franz, continuing his investigation.

"I mean that they have killed an enemy, which is a very different thing," returned the captain.

"Well," said the young man, "let us demand hospitality of these smugglers and bandits. Do you think they will grant it?"

"Without doubt."

"How many are they?"

"Four, and the two bandits make six."

"Just our number; so that if they prove troublesome we shall be able to check them. So, for the last time steer to Monte-Cristo."

"Yes; but your excellency will permit us to take all due precautions."

"By all means; be as wise as Nestor and as prudent as Ulysses. I do more than permit, I exhort you."

"Silence, then!" said Gaetano.

Every one obeyed.

The blaze illumined the sea for a hundred paces round. Gaetano skirted the light, carefully keeping the bark out of its rays; then, when they were opposite the fire, he entered into the centre of the circle, singing a fishing song, of which his companions sung the chorus.

At the first words of the song the men seated round the fire rose and approached the landing-place, their eyes fixed on the bark, of which they evidently sought to judge the force and divine the intention. They soon appeared satisfied, and returned (with the exception of one who remained at the shore) to their fire, at which a whole goat was roasting.

When the bark was within twenty paces of the shore, the man on the beach made with his carbine the movement of a sentinel who sees a patrol, and cried, "Who goes there!" in Sardinian. Franz coolly cocked both barrels. Gaetano then exchanged a few words with this man, which the traveller did not understand, but which evidently concerned him.

"Will your excellency give your name, or remain incognito?" asked the captain.

"My name must rest unknown—merely say I am a Frenchman travelling for pleasure."

As soon as Gaetano had transmitted this answer, the sentinel gave an order to one of the men seated round the fire, who rose and disappeared among the rocks. Not a word was spoken; every one seemed occupied—Franz with his disembarkment, the sailors with their sails, the smugglers with their goat; but in the midst of all this carelessness it was evident that they mutually observed each other.

The man who had disappeared returned suddenly, on the opposite side to that by which he had left. He made a sign with his head to the sentinel, who, turning to the bark, uttered these words, "*S'accomodi.*" The Italian *s'accomodi* is untranslatable; it means at once, "Come, enter, you are welcome; make yourself at home; you are the master." It is like that Turkish phrase of Molière's that so astonished *le bourgeois gentilhomme* by the number of things it contained.

The sailors did not wait for a second invitation; four strokes of the oar brought them to the land. Gaetano sprang to shore, exchanged a few words with the sentinel; then his comrades descended, and lastly came Franz's turn. One of his guns was swung over his shoulder; Gaetano had the other, and a sailor held his rifle. His dress, half artist, half dandy, did not excite any suspicion, and, consequently, no disquietude. The bark was moored to the shore, and they advanced a few paces to find a comfortable bivouac; but, doubtless, the spot they chose did not suit the smuggler who filled the post of sentinel, for he cried out,—

"Not that way, if you please."

Gaetano faltered an excuse, and advanced to the opposite side, whilst two sailors kindled torches at the fire to light them on their way. They advanced about thirty paces, and then stopped, at a small esplanade surrounded with rocks, in which seats had been cut, not unlike sentry-boxes. Around, in the crevices of the rocks, grew a few dwarf oaks and thick bushes of myrtles. Franz lowered a torch, and saw, by the light of a mass of cinders, that he was not the first to discover this retreat, which was, doubtless, one of the halting-places of the wandering visitors of Monte-Cristo.

He mentioned this to Gaetano, who replied that nothing could be more easy than to prepare a supper when they had in their boat bread, wine, half a dozen partridges, and a good fire to roast them by.

"Besides," added e, "if the smell of their roast

meat tempts you, I will go and offer them two of our birds for a slice."

"You seem born for negotiation," returned Franz. "Go and try."

During this time the sailors had collected dried sticks and branches, with which they made a fire.

Franz waited impatiently, smelling the odour of the goat, when the captain returned with a mysterious air.

"Well," said Franz, "anything new? Do they refuse?"

"On the contrary," returned Gaetano, "the chief, who was told you were a young Frenchman, invites you to sup with him."

"Well," observed Franz, "this chief is very polite, and I see no objection—the more so as I bring my share of the supper."

"Oh, it is not that—he has plenty, and to spare, for supper; but he attaches a singular condition to your presentation at his house."

"His house! Has he built one here, then?"

"No; but he has a very comfortable one all the same, so they say."

"You know this chief, then?"

"I have heard talk of him."

"Ill or well?"

"Both."

"The devil! And what is this condition?"

"That you are blindfolded, and do not take off the bandage until he himself bids you."

Franz looked at Gaetano, to see, if possible, what he thought of this proposal.

"Ah," replied he, guessing Franz's thought, "I know this merits reflection."

"What should you do in my place?"

"I, who have nothing to lose—I should go."

"You would accept?"

"Yes, were it only out of curiosity."

"There is something very curious about this chief, then?"

"Listen," said Gaetano, lowering his voice. "I do not know if what they say is true——"

He stopped to look if any one was near.

"What do they say?"

"That this chief inhabits a cavern to which the Pitti Palace is nothing."

"What nonsense!" said Franz, reseating himself.

"It is no nonsense; it is quite true. Cama, the pilot of the *Saint Ferdinand*, went in once, and he came back amazed, vowing that such treasures were only to be heard of in fairy tales."

"Do you know," observed Franz, "that with such stories you would make me enter the enchanted cavern of Ali Baba?"

"I tell you what I have been told."

"Then you advise me to accept?"

"Oh, I don't say that; your excellency will do as you please. I should be sorry to advise you in the matter."

Franz reflected a few moments, felt that a man so rich could not have any intention of plundering him of what little he had, and seeing only the prospect of a good supper, he accepted. Gaetano departed with the reply. Franz was prudent, and wished to learn all he possibly could concerning his host. He turned towards the sailor, who, during this dialogue, had sat gravely plucking the partridges with the air of a man proud of his office, and asked him how these men had landed, as no vessel of any kind was visible.

"Never mind that," returned the sailor; "I know their vessel."

"Is it a very beautiful vessel?"

"I would not wish for a better to sail round the world."

"Of what burden is she?"

"About a hundred tons; but she is built to stand any weather. She is what the English call a yacht."

"Where was she built?"

"I know not; but my own opinion is, she is a Genoese."

"And how did a leader of smugglers," continued Franz, "venture to build a vessel designed for such a purpose at Genoa?"

"I did not say that the owner was a smuggler," replied the sailor.

"No; but Gaetano did, I thought."

"Gaetano had only seen the vessel from a distance; he had not then spoken to any one."

"And if this person be not a smuggler, who is he?"

"A wealthy signor, who travels for his pleasure."

"Come," thought Franz, "he is still more mysterious, since the two accounts do not agree."

"What is his name?"

"If you ask him, he says Sinbad the Sailor; but I doubt it's being his real name."

"Sinbad the Sailor?"

"Yes."

"And where does he reside?"

"On the sea."

"What country does he come from?"

"I do not know."

"Have you ever seen him?"

"Sometimes."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"Your excellency will judge for yourself."

"Where will he receive me?"

"No doubt in the subterranean palace Gaetano told you of."

"Have you never had the curiosity, when you have landed and found this island deserted, to seek for this enchanted palace?"

"Oh, yes, more than once, but always in vain. We examined the grotto all over, but we never could find the slightest trace of any opening. They say that the door is not opened by a key, but a magical word."

"Decidedly," muttered Franz, "this is an adventure of the Arabian Nights."

"His excellency waits for you," said a voice, which he recognized as that of the sentinel.

He was accompanied by two of the yacht's crew. Franz drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and presented it to the man who had spoken to him. Without uttering a word they bandaged his eyes with a care that showed their apprehensions of his committing some indiscretion. Afterwards he was made to promise he would not make the least attempt to raise the bandage. He promised. Then his two guides took his arms, and he advanced guided by them, and preceded by the sentinel. Presently, by a change in the atmosphere, he comprehended that they were entering a cave. After going on for a few seconds more he heard a crackling, and it seemed to him as though the atmosphere again changed, and became balmy and perfumed. At length his feet touched on a thick and soft carpet, and his guides let go their hold of him. There was a moment's silence, and then a voice, in excellent French, although with a foreign accent, said,—

"Welcome, sir. I beg you will remove your bandage."

It may be supposed, then, Franz did not wait for a repetition of this permission, but took off the handkerchief, and found himself in the presence of a man from thirty-eight to forty years of age, dressed in a Tunisian costume—that is to say, a red cap, with a long blue silk tassel, a vest of black cloth embroidered with gold, pantaloons of deep red, large and full gaiters of the same colour, embroidered with gold like the vest, and yellow slippers; he had a splendid cachemire round his waist, and a small sharp and crooked cangiar was passed through his girdle.

But what astonished Franz, who had treated Gaetano's description as a fable, was the splendour of the apartment in which he found himself. The entire chamber was lined with crimson brocade, worked with flowers of gold.

In a recess was a kind of divan, surmounted with a stand of Arabian swords in silver scabbards, and the handles resplendent with gems; from the ceiling hung a lamp of Venice glass, of beautiful shape and colour, whilst the feet rested on a Turkey carpet, in which they sunk to the instep; tapestry hung before the door by which Franz had entered, and also in front of another door, leading into a second apartment which seemed to be brilliantly lighted up. The host gave Franz time for his surprise, and, moreover, rendered him look for look, not even taking his eyes off him.

"Sir," he said, after some pause, "a thousand excuses for the precaution taken in your introduction hither; but as, during the greater portion of the year, this island is deserted, if the secret of this abode were discovered, I should, doubtless, find on my return my temporary retirement in a great state of disorder, which would be exceedingly annoying, not for the loss it occasioned me, but because I should not have the certainty I now possess of separating myself from all the rest of mankind at pleasure. Let me now endeavour to make you forget this temporary unpleasantness, and offer you what no doubt, you did not expect to find here—that is to say, a tolerable supper and pretty comfortable beds."

"*Ma foi!* my dear sir," replied Franz, "make no apologies. I have always observed that they bandage people's eyes who penetrate enchanted palaces—for instance, those of Raoul in the 'Huguenots'—and really I have nothing to complain of, for what I see is a sequel to the wonders of the 'Arabian Nights.'"

"Alas! I may say with Lucullus, If I could have anticipated the honour of your visit, I would have prepared for it. But such as is my hermitage, it is at your disposal; such as is my supper, it is yours to share, if you will.—Ali, is the supper ready?"

At this moment the tapestry moved aside, and a Nubian, as black as ebony, and dressed in a plain white

tunic, made a sign to his master that all was prepared in the *salle-à-manger*.

"Now," said the unknown to Franz, "I do not know if you are of my opinion, but I think nothing is more annoying than to remain two or three hours *tête-à-tête* without knowing by name or appellation how to address one another. Pray observe, that I too much respect the laws of hospitality to ask your name or title. I only request you to give me one by which I may have the pleasure of addressing you. As for myself, that I may put you at your ease, I tell you that I am generally called 'Sinbad the Sailor.'"

"And I," replied Franz, "will tell you, as I only require his wonderful lamp to make me precisely like Aladdin, that I see no reason why at this moment I should not be called Aladdin. That will keep us from going away from the East, whither I am tempted to think I have been conveyed by some good genius."

"Well, then, Signor Aladdin," replied the singular Amphitryon, "you heard our repast announced; will you now take the trouble to enter the *salle-à-manger*, your humble servant going first to show the way?"

At these words, moving aside the tapestry, Sinbad preceded his guest. Franz proceeded from one enchantment to another. The table was splendidly covered; and once convinced of this important point, he cast his eyes around him. The *salle-à-manger* was scarcely less striking than the boudoir he had just left. It was entirely of marble, with antique bas-reliefs of priceless value; and at the four corners of this apartment, which was oblong, were four magnificent statues, having baskets on their heads. These baskets contained four pyramids of most splendid fruit; there were the pine-apples of Sicily, pomegranates from Malaga, oranges from the Balearic Isles, peaches from France, and dates from Tunis.

The supper consisted of a roast pheasant, garnished

with Corsican blackbirds; a boar's ham *à la gelée*, a quarter of a kid *à la tartare*, a glorious turbot, and a gigantic lobster. Between these large dishes were smaller ones containing various dainties. The dishes were of silver, and the plates of Japanese china.

Franz rubbed his eyes in order to assure himself that this was not a dream. Ali alone was present to wait at table, and acquitted himself so admirably that the guest complimented his host thereupon.

"Yes," replied he, whilst he did the honours of the supper with much ease and grace—"yes, he is a poor devil who is much devoted to me, and does all he can to prove it. He remembers I saved his life, and, as he has a regard for his head, he feels some gratitude towards me for having kept it on his shoulders."

Ali approached his master, took his hand and kissed it.

"Would it be impertinent, Signor Sinbad," said Franz, "to ask you the particulars of this kindness?"

"Oh, they are simple enough," replied the host. "It seems the fellow had been caught wandering nearer to the harem of the Bey of Tunis than etiquette permits to one of his colour, and he was condemned by the Bey to have his tongue cut out, and his hand and head cut off—the tongue the first day, the hand the second, and the head the third. I always had a desire to have a mute in my service; so, learning the day his tongue was cut out, I went to the Bey and proposed to give him for Ali a splendid double-barrelled gun, which I knew he was very desirous of having. He hesitated a moment, he was so very desirous to complete the poor devil's punishment. But when I added to the gun an English cutlass with which I had shivered his highness's yataghan to pieces, the Bey yielded, and agreed to forgive the hand and head, but on condition he never again set foot in Tunis. This was a useless clause in the bargain, for whenever the coward sees the first glimpse of the shores of Africa, he runs down below, and can only be induced

to appear again when we are out of sight of one quarter of the globe."

Franz remained a moment mute and pensive, hardly knowing what to think of the half-kindness, half-cruelty, with which his host related the brief narrative.

"And like the celebrated sailor whose name you have assumed," he said, by way of changing the conversation, "you pass your life in travelling?"

"Yes. I made a vow at a time when I little thought I should ever be able to accomplish it," said the unknown, with a singular smile; "and I made some others also, which I hope I may fulfil in due season."

Although Sinbad pronounced these words with much calmness, his eyes darted gleams of singular ferocity.

"You have suffered a great deal, sir?" said Franz inquiringly.

Sinbad started, and looked fixedly at him as he replied, "What makes you suppose so?"

"Everything," answered Franz—"your voice, your look, your pallid complexion, and even the life you lead."

"I! I live the happiest life possible—the real life of a pacha. I am king of all creation. I am pleased with one place, and stay there; I get tired of it, and leave it. Ah! if you had tasted my life, you would not desire any other, and would never return to the world unless you had some great project to accomplish there."

"A vengeance for instance!" observed Franz.

The unknown fixed on the young man one of those looks which penetrate into the depth of the heart and thoughts.

"And why a vengeance?" he asked.

"Because," replied Franz, "you seem to me like a man who, persecuted by society, has a fearful account to settle with it."

"Ah!" responded Sinbad, laughing with his singular laugh, which displayed his white and sharp teeth, "you have not guessed rightly. Such as you see me I am, a sort

of philosopher, and one day perhaps I shall go to Paris to rival M. Appert and the little man in the blue cloak."

"And will that be the first time you ever took that journey?"

"Yes, it will. I must seem to you by no means curious, but I assure you that it is not my fault I have delayed it so long—it will happen one day or the other."

"And do you propose to make this journey very shortly?"

"I do not know; it depends on circumstances which depend on certain arrangements."

"I should like to be there at the time you come, and I will endeavour to repay you as far as lies in my power for your liberal hospitality displayed to me at Monte-Cristo."

"I should avail myself of your offer with pleasure," replied the host; "but, unfortunately, if I go there, it will be, in all probability, incognito."

The supper appeared to have been supplied solely for Franz, for the unknown scarcely touched one or two dishes of the splendid banquet to which his guest did ample justice. Then Ali brought on the dessert, or rather took the baskets from the hands of the statues and placed them on the table. Between the two baskets he placed a small silver cup, closed with a lid of the same. The care with which Ali placed this cup on the table roused Franz's curiosity. He raised the lid, and saw a kind of greenish paste, something like preserved angelica, but which was perfectly unknown to him. He replaced the lid, as ignorant of what the cup contained as he was before he had looked at it, and then casting his eyes towards his host, he saw him smile at his disappointment.

"You cannot guess," said he, "what there is in that small vase, can you?"

"No, I really cannot."

"Well, then, that kind of green preserve is nothing less than the ambrosia which Hebe served at the table of Jupiter!"

"But," replied Franz, "this ambrosia, no doubt, in passing through mortal hands, has lost its heavenly appellation and assumed a human name. In vulgar phrase, what may you term this composition, for which, to say the truth, I do not feel any particular desire?"

"Ah! thus it is that our material origin is revealed," cried Sinbad; "we frequently pass so near to happiness without seeing, without regarding it, or if we do see and regard it, yet without recognizing it. Are you a man for the substantials, and is gold your god?—taste this, and the mines of Peru, Guzerat, and Golconda are opened to you. Are you a man of imagination, a poet?—taste this, and the boundaries of possibility disappear; the fields of infinite space open to you, you advance free in heart, free in mind, into the boundless realms of unfettered reverie. Are you ambitious, and do you seek after the greatnesses of the earth?—taste this, and in an hour you will be a king, not a king of a petty kingdom hidden in some corner of Europe like France, Spain, or England, but king of the world, king of the universe, king of creation; without bowing at the feet of Satan, you will be king and master of all the kingdoms of the earth. Is it not tempting what I offer you, and is it not an easy thing, since it is only to do thus? look!"

At these words he uncovered the small cup which contained the substance so lauded, took a teaspoonful of the magic sweetmeat, raised it to his lips, and swallowed it slowly, with his eyes half shut and his head bent backwards.

Franz did not disturb him whilst he absorbed his favourite *bonne bouche*; but when he had finished, he inquired,—

"What, then, is this precious stuff?"

"Did you ever hear," he replied, "of the Old Man of the Mountain who attempted to assassinate Philippe Augustus?"

"Of course I have."

"Well, you know he reigned over a rich valley which was overhung by the mountain whence he derived his picturesque name. In this valley were magnificent gardens planted by Hassen-ben-Sabah, and in these gardens isolated pavilions. Into these pavilions he admitted the elect; and there, says Marco Polo, gave them to eat a certain herb which transported them to paradise, in the midst of ever-blooming shrubs, ever-ripe fruit, and ever-lovely virgins. But what these happy persons took for reality was but a dream; but it was a dream so soft, so voluptuous, so enthralling, that they sold themselves body and soul to him who gave it to them; and obedient to his orders as those of a deity, struck down the marked victim, died in torture without a murmur, believing that the death they underwent was but a quick transition to that life of delights of which the holy herb, now before you, had given them a slight foretaste."

"Then," cried Franz, "it is hatchis! I know that—by name at least."

"That is it precisely, Signor Aladdin; it is hatchis—the purest and most unadulterated hatchis of Alexandria—the hatchis of Abou-Gor, the celebrated maker, the only man, the man to whom there should be built a palace, inscribed with these words, '*A grateful world to the dealer in happiness.*'"

"Do you know," said Franz, "I have a very great inclination to judge for myself of the truth or exaggeration of your eulogies!"

"Judge for yourself, Signor Aladdin—judge; but do not confine yourself to one trial. Like everything else, we must habituate the senses to a fresh impression, gentle or violent, sad or joyous. There is a struggle in nature against this divine substance—in nature which is not made for joy and clings to pain. Nature subdued must yield in the combat, the dream must succeed to reality, and then the dream reigns supreme, then the dream becomes life, and life becomes the dream. But

what changes occur! It is only by comparing the pains of actual being with the joys of the assumed existence that you would desire to live no longer, but to dream thus for ever. When you return to this mundane sphere from your visionary world, you would seem to leave a Neapolitan spring for a Lapland winter—to quit paradise for earth, heaven for hell! Taste the hatchis, guest of mine—taste the hatchis!"

Franz's only reply was to take a teaspoonful of the marvellous preparation—about as much in quantity as his host had eaten—and lift it to his mouth.

"*Diable!*" he said, after having swallowed the divine preserve. "I do not know if the result will be as agreeable as you describe, but the thing does not appear to me as succulent as you say."

"Because your palate has not yet attained the sublimity of the substances it flavours. Tell me, the first time you tasted oysters, tea, porter, truffles, and sundry other dainties which you now adore, did you like them? Could you comprehend how the Romans stuffed their pheasants with assafœtida, and the Chinese eat swallows' nests? Eh? no? Well, it is the same with hatchis; only eat for a week, and nothing in the world will seem to you to equal the delicacy of its flavour, which now appears to you sleepy and distasteful. Let us now go into the chamber beside you, which is your apartment, and Ali will bring us coffee and pipes."

They both arose, and whilst he who called himself Sinbad—and whom we have occasionally named so, that we might, like his guest, have some title by which to distinguish him—gave some orders to the servant, Franz entered the adjoining apartment. It was simply yet richly furnished. It was round, and a large divan completely encircled it. Divan, walls, ceiling, floor, were all covered with magnificent skins, as soft and downy as the richest carpets: there were skins of the lions of Atlas, with their large manes; skins of the Bengal tigers, with their striped hides; skins of the panthers

of the Cape, spotted beautifully, like those that appeared to Dante; skins of the bears of Siberia, the foxes of Norway, etc; and all these skins were strewn in profusion one on the other, so that it seemed like walking over the most mossy turf, or reclining on the most luxurious bed.

Both laid themselves down on the divan: chibouques, with jasmine tubes and amber mouthpieces, were within reach, and all prepared so that there was no need to smoke the same pipe twice. Each of them took one, which Ali lighted, and then retired to prepare the coffee. There was a moment's silence, during which Sinbad gave himself up to thoughts that seemed to occupy him incessantly, even in the midst of his conversation; and Franz abandoned himself to that mute reverie, into which we always sink when smoking excellent tobacco, which seems to remove with its fume all the troubles of the mind, and to give the smoker in exchange all the visions of the soul. Ali brought in the coffee.

"How do you take it?" inquired the unknown; "*à la Française* or *à la Turque*, strong or weak, sugar or none, cool or boiling? As you please; it is ready in all ways."

"I will take it *à la Turque*," replied Franz.

"And you are right," said his host; "it shows you have a tendency for an Oriental life. Ah! those Orientals! they are the only men who know how to live. As for me," he added, with one of those singular smiles which did not escape the young man, "when I have completed my affairs in Paris, I shall go and die in the East; and should you wish to see me again, you must seek me at Cairo, Bagdad, or Ispahan."

"*Ma foi!*" said Franz, "it would be the easiest thing in the world; for I feel eagle's wings springing out at my shoulders, and with these wings I could make a tour of the world in four-and-twenty hours."

"Ah! ah! it is the hatchis that is operating. Well, unfurl your wings and fly into superhuman regions. Fear nothing; there is a watch over you; and if your

wings, like those of Icarus, melt before the sun, we are here to receive you."

He then said some Arabian words to Ali, who made a sign of obedience and withdrew, but not to any distance. As to Franz, a strange transformation had taken place in him. All the bodily fatigue of the day, all the preoccupation of mind which the events of the evening had brought on, disappeared, as they would at that first feeling of sleep, when we are still sufficiently conscious to be aware of the coming of slumber. His body seemed to acquire an airy lightness, his perception brightened in a remarkable manner, his senses seemed to redouble their power, the horizon continued to expand; but it was not that gloomy horizon over which a vague alarm prevails, and which he had seen before he slept, but a blue, transparent, unbounded horizon, with all the blue of the ocean, all the spangles of the sun, all the perfumes of the summer breeze; then, in the midst of the songs of his sailors—songs so clear and sounding that they would have made a divine harmony had their notes been taken down—he saw the isle of Monte-Cristo, no longer as a threatening rock in the midst of the waves, but as an oasis lost in the desert: then, as the bark approached, the songs became louder, for an enchanting and mysterious harmony rose to heaven from this island, as if some fay-like Lorelay, or some enchanter like Amphion, had decreed to attract thither a soul, or build there a city.

At length the bark touched the shore, but without effort, without shock, as lips touch lips, and he entered the grotto amidst the continued strains of most delicious melody. He descended, or rather seemed to descend, several steps, inspiring the fresh and balmy air, like that which may be supposed to reign around the grotto of Circé, formed from such perfumes as set the mind a-dreaming, and such fires as burn the very senses; and he saw again all he had seen before his sleep, from Sinbad, his singular host, to Ali, the mute attendant; then all

seemed to fade away and become confused before his eyes, like the last shadows of the magic lantern before it is extinguished, and he was again in the chamber of statues, lighted only by one of those pale and antique lamps which watch in the dead of the night over the sleep of pleasure. They were the same statues, rich in form, in attraction, and poesy, with eyes of fascination, smiles of love, and "bright and flowing hair." They were Phyrne, Cleopatra, Messalina, those three celebrated courtesans; then amongst them glided like a pure ray, like a Christian angel in the midst of Olympus, one of those chaste figures, those calm shadows, those soft visions, which seemed to veil its virgin brow before these marble wantons. Then these three statues advanced towards him with looks of love, and approached the couch on which he was reposing, their feet hidden in their long tunics, their throats bare, hair flowing like waves, and assuming attitudes which the gods could not resist, but which saints withstood, and looks inflexible and ardent like the serpent's on the bird; and then he gave way before these looks as painful as a powerful grasp and as delightful as a kiss.

It seemed to Franz that he closed his eyes, and thought that in the last look he gave he saw the modest statue completely veiled; and then with his eyes closed upon all nature his senses awoke to impassable impressions, and he was under the painful yet delicious enthralment produced by the hatchis, whose enchantment had brought up this marvellous and thrilling vision.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WAKING.

When Franz returned to himself, exterior objects seemed a second portion of his dream; he thought him-

self in a sepulchre, into which scarcely penetrated (and then like a look of pity) a ray of the sun; he stretched forth his hand and touched stone; he rose to his seat and found himself lying on a bed of dry heather, very soft and odoriferous. The vision had entirely fled, and as if the statues had been but shadows coming from their tomb during his dream, they vanished at his waking.

He advanced several paces towards the point whence the light came, and to all the excitement of his dream succeeded the calmness of reality. He found that he was in a grotto, went towards the opening, and through a kind of fanlight saw a blue sea and an azure sky. The air and water were shining in the beams of the morning sun, on the shore the sailors were sitting chatting and laughing, and at ten yards from them the bark was at anchor, undulating gracefully on the water.

He went gaily up to the sailors, who rose as soon as they perceived him, and the master accosting him, said,—

"The Signor Sinbad has left his compliments for your excellency, and desired us to express the regret he feels at not being able to take his leave in person, but he trusts you will excuse him, as very important business calls him to Malaga."

"So, then, Gaetano," said Franz, "this is then all reality; there exists a man who has received me in this isle, entertained me right royally, and has departed whilst I was asleep?"

"He exists as certainly as that you may see his small yacht with all her sails spread; and if you will use your glass, you will, in all probability, recognize your host in the midst of his crew."

So saying, Gaetano pointed in a direction in which a small vessel was making sail towards the southern point of Corsica.

Franz adjusted his telescope and directed it toward the bark.

Gaetano was not mistaken. At the stern the mysterious stranger was standing up looking towards the shore,

and holding a spyglass in his hand. He was attired as he had been on the previous evening, and waved his pocket-handkerchief to his guest in token of adieu.

Franz returned the salute by shaking his handkerchief as an exchange of signals.

After a second a slight cloud of smoke was seen at the stern of the vessel, which rose gracefully as it expanded in the air, and then Franz heard a slight report.

"There, do you hear?" observed Gaetano; "he is bidding you adieu."

The young man took his carbine and fired it in the air, but without any idea that the noise could be heard at the distance which separated the yacht from the shore.

Franz was sitting on the spot where he was on the previous evening, when his mysterious host had invited him to supper, and he saw the little yacht, now like a sea-gull on the wave, continuing her flight towards Corsica.

"Why," he remarked to Gaetano, "you told me that Signor Sinbad was going to Malaga, whilst it seems he is in the direction of Porto-Vecchio."

"Don't you remember," said the master, "I told you that amongst the crew there were two Corsican brigands?"

"True; and is he going to land them?" added Franz.

"Precisely so," replied Gaetano. "Ah, he is an individual who fears neither God nor devil, they say, and would at any time run fifty leagues out of his course to do a poor devil a service."

"But such services as these might involve him with the authorities of the country in which he practises this kind of philanthropy," said Franz.

"And what cares he for that?" replied Gaetano, with a laugh, "or any authorities? He smiles at them. Let them try to pursue him. Why, in the first place, his yacht is not a ship, but a bird, and he would beat any frigate three knots in every nine; and if he were to throw himself on the coast, why, ain't he certain of finding friends everywhere?"

It was perfectly clear that the Signor Sinbad, Franz's host, had the honour of being on excellent terms with the smugglers and bandits along the whole coast of the Mediterranean, which placed him in a position singular enough.

As to Franz, he had no longer any inducement to remain at Monte-Cristo. He had lost all hope of detecting the secret of the grotto; he consequently dispatched his breakfast, and, his bark being ready, he hastened on board, and they were soon under way.

At the moment the bark began her course they lost sight of the yacht, as it disappeared in the gulf of Porto-Vecchio. With it was effaced the last trace of the preceding night, and then supper, Sinbad, hatchis, statues, all became a dream for Franz. The bark went on all day and all night, and next morning, when the sun rose, they had lost sight of Monte-Cristo.

When Franz had once again set foot on shore, he forgot, for the moment at least, the events which had just passed, whilst he finished his affairs of pleasure at Florence, and then thought of nothing but how he should rejoin his companion, who was awaiting him at Rome.

He set out, and on the Saturday evening reached the Place de la Douane by the *malle-poste*. An apartment, as we have said, had been retained beforehand, and thus he had but to go to the hotel of Maître Pastrini. On his first inquiry, he was told, with the impertinence peculiar to hackney-coachmen who are hired and innkeepers with their houses full, that there was no room for him at the Hôtel de Londres. Then he sent his card to Maître Pastrini, and demanded Albert de Morcerf. This plan succeeded, and Maître Pastrini himself ran to him, excusing himself for having made his excellency wait, scolding the waiters, taking the candlestick in his hand from the cicerone, who was ready to pounce on the traveller, and was about to lead him to Albert when Morcerf himself appeared.

The apartment consisted of two small rooms and a

closet. The two rooms looked on to the street, a fact which Maître Pastrini commented upon as an inappreciable advantage. The remainder of the story was hired by a very rich gentleman who was supposed to be a Sicilian or Maltese; but the host was unable to decide to which of the two nations the traveller belonged.

"Very good, Maître Pastrini," said Franz, "but we must have some supper instantly, and a carriage for to-morrow and the following days."

"As for supper," replied the landlord, "you shall be served immediately; but as for the carriage——"

"What as to the carriage?" exclaimed Albert. "Come, come, Maître Pastrini, no joking; we must have a carriage."

"Sir," replied the host, "we will do all in our power to procure you one—this is all I can say."

"And when shall we know?" inquired Franz.

"To-morrow morning," answered the innkeeper.

"Oh, the devil! Then we shall pay the more, that's all, I see plainly enough. At Drake and Aaron's one pays twenty-five francs for common days, and thirty or thirty-five francs a day for Sundays and fêtes; add five francs a day more for extras—that will make forty, and there's an end of it."

"I am afraid if we offer them double that, we shall not procure a carriage."

"Then they must put horses to mine. It is a little the worse for the journey, but that's no matter."

"There are no horses."

Albert looked at Franz like a man who hears a reply he does not understand.

"Do you understand that, my dear Franz?—no horses," he said.—"But can't we have post-horses?"

"They have been all hired this fortnight, and there are none left but those absolutely requisite for posting."

"What are we to say to this?" asked Franz.

"I say, that when a thing completely surpasses my comprehension, I am accustomed not to dwell on that

thing, but to pass to another.—Is supper ready, Maître Pastrini?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Well, then, let us sup."

"But the carriage and horses?" said Franz.

"Be easy, my dear boy; they will come in due season; it is only a question of how much shall be charged for them."

Morcerf then, with that delightful philosophy which believes that nothing is impossible to a full purse and well-lined pocket-book, supped, went to bed, slept soundly, and dreamed he was racing all over Rome at Carnival time in a coach with six horses.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ROMAN BANDITS.

THE next morning Franz woke first, and instantly rang the bell. The sound had not yet died away when Maître Pastrini himself entered.

"Well, excellency," said the landlord, triumphantly, and without waiting for Franz to question him, "I feared yesterday, when I would not promise you anything, that you were too late. There is not a single carriage to be had—that is, for the three last days."

"Yes," returned Franz, "that is for the very three days it is most necessary."

"What is the matter?" said Albert, entering. "No carriage to be had?"

"Just so," returned Franz; "you have guessed it."

"Well, your Eternal City is a devilish nice city."

"That is to say, excellency," replied Pastrini, who was desirous to keep up the dignity of the capital of the Christian world in the eyes of his guests, "that there are no carriages to be had from Sunday to Tues-

day evening, but from now till Sunday you can have fifty if you please."

"Ah, that is something," said Albert. "To-day is Thursday, and who knows what may arrive between this and Sunday?"

"Ten or twelve thousand travellers will arrive," replied Franz, "which will make it still more difficult."

"My friend," said Morcerf, "let us enjoy the present without gloomy forebodings for the future."

"At least we can have a window?"

"Where?"

"Looking on the Rue de Cours."

"Ah, a window!" exclaimed Maître Pastrini; "utterly impossible. There was only one left on the fifth floor of the Doria Palace, and that has been let to a Russian prince for twenty sequins a day."

The two young men looked at each other with an air of stupefaction.

"Well," said Franz to Albert, "do you know what is the best thing we can do? It is to pass the Carnival at Venice; there we are sure of obtaining gondolas if we cannot have carriages."

"Ah, the devil! no," cried Albert. "I came to Rome to see the Carnival, and I will, though I see it on stilts."

"Bravo! an excellent idea. We will disguise ourselves as monster pulchinellos or shepherds of the Landes, and we shall have complete success."

"Do your excellencies still wish for a carriage from now to Sunday morning?"

"*Parbleu!*" said Albert, "do you think we are going to run about on foot in the streets of Rome, like lawyers' clerks?"

"I hasten to comply with your excellencies' wishes; only, I tell you beforehand, the carriage will cost you six piastres a day."

"And, as I am not a millionaire, like the gentleman in the next apartments," said Franz, "I warn you, that as I have been four times before at Rome. I know the

prices of all the carriages. We will give you twelve piastres for to-day, to-morrow, and the day after, and then you will make a good profit."

"But, excellency——" said Pastrini, still striving to gain his point.

"Now go," returned Franz, "or I shall go myself and bargain with your *affilitatore*, who is mine also. He is an old friend of mine, who has plundered me pretty well already, and, in the hope of making more out of me, he will take a less price than the one I offer you; you will lose the preference, and that will be your fault."

"Do not give yourself the trouble, excellency," returned Maître Pastrini, with that smile of the Italian speculator who avows himself defeated; "I will do all I can, and I hope you will be satisfied."

"Ah, now we understand each other."

"When do you wish the carriage to be here?"

"In an hour."

"In an hour it will be at the door."

An hour after the vehicle was at the door. It was a hack conveyance, which was elevated to the rank of a private carriage in honour of the occasion; but, in spite of its humble exterior, the young men would have thought themselves happy to have secured it for the last three days of the Carnival.

Franz and Albert descended; the carriage approached the palace; their excellencies stretched their legs along the seats; the cicerone sprang into the seat behind.

"Where do your excellencies wish to go?" asked he.

"To Saint Peter's first, and then to the Colosseum," returned Albert.

But Albert did not know that it takes a day to see Saint Peter's, and a month to study it. The day was passed at Saint Peter's alone. Suddenly the daylight began to fade away; Franz took out his watch—it was half-past four. They returned to the hotel; at the door Franz ordered the coachman to be ready at eight. He wished to show Albert the Colosseum by moonlight, as

he had shown him Saint Peter's by daylight. When we show a friend a city one has already visited, we feel the same pride as when we point out a woman whose lover we have been. He was to leave the city by the Porte del Popolo, skirt the outer wall, and re-enter by the Porte San Giovanni; thus they would behold the Colosseum without being in some measure prepared by the sight of the Capitol, the Forum, the Arch of Septimus Severus, the Temple of Antonius and Faustina, and the Via Sacra.

They sat down to dinner. Maître Pastrini had promised them a banquet; he gave them a tolerable repast. At the end of the dinner he entered in person. Franz concluded he came to hear his dinner praised, and began accordingly, but at the first words he interrupted him.

"Excellency," said he, "I am delighted to have your approbation, but it was not for that I came."

"Did you come to tell us you have procured a carriage?" asked Albert, lighting his cigar.

"No; and your excellencies will do well not to think of that any longer. At Rome things can or cannot be done; when you are told anything cannot be done, there is an end of it."

"But," said Franz, "you had some motive for coming here; may I beg to know what it was?"

"Ah, yes! You have ordered your carriage at eight o'clock precisely?"

"I have."

"You intend visiting *Il Colosseo?*"

"You mean the Colosseum?"

"It is the same thing. You have told your coachman to leave the city by the Porte del Popolo, to drive round the walls, and re-enter by the Porte San Giovanni?"

"These are my words exactly."

"Well, this route is impossible."

"Impossible!"

"Very dangerous, to say the least."

"Dangerous! And why?"

"On account of the famous Luigi Vampa."

"Pray who may this famous Luigi Vampa be?" inquired Albert. "He may be very famous at Rome, but I can assure you he is quite unknown at Paris."

"What! do you not know him?"

"I have not that honour."

"You have never heard his name?"

"Never."

"Well, then, he is a bandit, compared to whom the Decesaris and the Gasparones were mere children."

"Well, what has this bandit to do with the order I have given the coachman, to leave the city by the Porte del Popolo, and to re-enter by the Porte San Giovanni?"

"This," replied Maître Pastrini: "that you will go out by one, but I very much doubt your returning by the other."

"Why?" asked Franz.

"Because after nightfall you are not safe fifty yards from the gates."

"On your honour, is that true?" cried Albert.

"M. le Comte," returned Maître Pastrini, hurt at Albert's repeated doubts of the truth of his assertions, "I do not say this to you, but to your companion, who knows Rome, and knows, too, that these things are not to be laughed at."

"My dear fellow," said Albert, turning to Franz, "here is an admirable adventure. We will fill our carriage with pistols, blunderbusses, and double-barrelled guns. Luigi Vampa comes to take us, and we take him; we bring him back to Rome, and present him to his holiness the Pope, who asks how he can repay so great a service; then we merely ask for a carriage and a pair of horses, and we see the Carnival in the carriage, and doubtless the Roman people will crown us at the Capitol, and proclaim us, like Curtius and Horatius Coclès, the preservers of the country."

"My dear Albert," returned Franz, "your answer is

sublime, and worthy the '*Let him die*' of Corneille; only, when Horace made that answer, the safety of Rome was concerned; but as for us, it is only to gratify a whim, and it would be ridiculous to risk our lives for so foolish a motive."

Albert poured himself out a glass of *lacryma Christi*, which he sipped at intervals, muttering some unintelligible words.

"Well, Maître Pastrini," said Franz, "now that my companion is quieted, and you have seen how peaceful my intentions are, tell me who is this Luigi Vampa."

"You could not apply to any one better able to inform you on all these points, for I knew him when he was a child; and one day that I fell into his hands going from Ferentino to Alatri, he, fortunately for me, recollected me, and set me free, not only without ransom, but made me a present of a very splendid watch, and related his history to me."

"Let us see the watch," said Albert.

Maître Pastrini drew from his fob a magnificent Bréguet, bearing the name of its maker, of Parisian manufacture, and a count's coronet.

"Here it is," said he.

"*Peste!*" returned Albert, "I compliment you on it. I have its fellow"—he took his watch from his waistcoat pocket—"and it cost me 3,000 francs (£120)."

"Let us hear the history," said Franz, motioning Maître Pastrini to seat himself.

"Your excellencies permit it?" asked the host.

"*Pardieu!*" cried Albert, "you are not a preacher, to remain standing."

The host sat down, after having made each of them a respectful bow, which meant to say he was ready to tell them all they wished to know concerning Luigi Vampa.

"You tell me," said Franz, at the moment Maître Pastrini was about to open his mouth, "that you knew Luigi Vampa when he was a child. He is still a young man, then?"

"A young man! He is only two-and-twenty. He will gain himself a reputation."

"What do you think of that, Albert? At two-and-twenty to be thus famous?"

"Yes; and at his age, Alexander, Cæsar, and Napoleon, who have all made some noise in the world, were not so advanced."

"So," continued Franz, "the hero of this history is only two-and-twenty?"

"Scarcely so much."

"Is he tall or short?"

"Of the middle height—about the same stature as his excellency," returned the host, pointing to Albert.

"Thanks for the comparison," said Albert, with a bow.

"Go on, Maître Pastrini," continued Franz, smiling at his friend's susceptibility. "To what class of society does he belong?"

"He was a shepherd-boy attached to the farm of the Comte de San-Felice, situated between Palestrina and the lake of Gabri. He was born at Pampinara, and entered the count's service when he was five years old. His father was also a shepherd, who owned a small flock, and lived by the wool and the milk which he sold at Rome. When quite a child, the little Vampa was of a most extraordinary disposition. One day when he was seven years old, he came to the curé of Palestrina and prayed him to teach him to read. It was somewhat difficult, for he could not quit his flock; but the good curé went every day to say mass at a little hamlet too poor to pay a priest, and which, having no other name, was called Borgo. He told Luigi that he might meet him on his return, and that then he would give him a lesson, warning him that it would be short, and that he must profit as much as possible by it. The child accepted joyfully.

"Every day Luigi led his flock to graze on the road that leads from Palestrina to Borgo; every day, at nine o'clock in the morning, the priest and the boy sat down

on a bank by the wayside, and the little shepherd took his lesson out of the priest's breviary. At the end of three months he had learned to read. This was not enough—he must now learn to write.

"The curé related this anecdote to the Comte de San-Felice, who sent for the little shepherd, made him read and write before him, ordered his attendant to let him eat with the domestics, and to give him two piastres a month. With this Luigi purchased books and pencils.

"He applied to everything his imitative powers, and, like young Giotto, he drew on his slate sheep, houses, and trees. Then with his knife he began to carve all sorts of objects in wood. It was thus that Pinelli, the famous sculptor, had commenced.

"A girl of six or seven—that is, a little younger than Vampa—tended sheep on a farm near Palestrina. She was an orphan, born at Valmontone, and was named Teresa.

"The two children met, sat down near each other, let their flocks mingle together, played, laughed, and conversed together. In the evening they separated the flock of the Comte de San-Felice from those of the Baron de Cervetri, and the children returned to their respective farms, promising to meet the next morning. The next day they kept their word, and thus grew up. Vampa was twelve, and Teresa eleven; and yet their natural disposition revealed itself.

"Besides his taste for the fine arts, which Luigi had carried as far as he could in his solitude, he was sad by fits, ardent by starts, angry by caprice, and always sarcastic. Teresa alone ruled, by a look, a word, a gesture, this impetuous character, which yielded beneath the hand of a woman, and which beneath the hand of a man might have broken, but would never have bent or yielded.

"Teresa was, on the contrary, lively and gay, but coquettish to excess. The two piastres that Luigi received every month from the Comte de San-Felice's

steward, and the price of all the little carvings in wood he sold at Rome, were expended in earrings, necklaces, and gold hairpins. So that, thanks to her friend's generosity, Teresa was the most beautiful and the best-attired peasant near Rome.

"One day the young shepherd told the count's steward he had seen a wolf come out of the Sabine mountains and prowl around his flock. The steward gave him a gun; this was what Vampa longed for. This gun had an excellent barrel, made at Breschia, and carrying a ball with the precision of an English rifle.

"From this moment Vampa devoted all his leisure time in perfecting himself in the use of this precious weapon; he purchased powder and ball, and everything served him for a mark.

"One evening a wolf emerged from a pine-wood near which they were usually stationed, but the wolf had scarcely advanced ten yards ere he was dead. Proud of this exploit, Vampa took the dead animal on his shoulders and carried him to the farm.

"All these circumstances had gained Luigi considerable reputation. The man of superior abilities always finds admirers, go where he will. He was spoken of as the most adroit, the strongest, and the most courageous *contadino* for ten leagues round; and although Teresa was universally allowed to be the most beautiful girl of the Sabines, no one had ever spoken to her of love, because it was known that she was beloved by Vampa. And yet the two young people had never declared their affection; they had grown together like two trees whose roots are mingled, whose branches intertwine, and whose perfume rises together to the heavens. Only their wish to see each other had become a necessity, and they would have preferred death to a day's separation. Teresa was sixteen and Vampa eighteen.

"About this time a band of brigands that had established itself in the Lepini mountains began to be much spoken of. The brigands have never been really ex-

tirpated from the neighbourhood of Rome. Sometimes it wants a chief, but when a chief presents himself he rarely wants a band.

"The celebrated Cucumetto, pursued in the Abruzzo, driven out of the kingdom of Naples, where he had carried on a regular war, had crossed the Garigliano, like Manfred, and had come between Sonnino and Juperno, to take refuge on the banks of the Amasine. He it was who strove to reorganize a band, and who followed the footsteps of Decesaris and Gasperone, whom he hoped to surpass. Many young men of Palestrina, Frascati, and Pampinara disappeared. Their disappearance at first caused much inquietude; but it was soon known they had joined the band of Cucumetto. After some time Cucumetto became the object of universal attention; the most extraordinary traits of ferocious daring and brutality were related of him.

"These narratives were frequently the themes of conversation between Luigi and Teresa. The young girl trembled very much at all those tales; but Vampa reassured her with a smile, tapping the butt of his good fowling-piece, which threw its ball so well; and if that did not restore her courage, he pointed to a crow perched on some dead branch, took an aim, touched the trigger, and the bird fell dead at the foot of the tree.

"Time passed on, and the two young people had settled to be married when Vampa should be twenty and Teresa nineteen years of age. They were both orphans, and had only their employers' leave to ask, which had been already sought and obtained. One day when they were talking over their plans for the future, they heard two or three reports of firearms, and then suddenly a man came out of the wood, near which the two young persons used to graze their flocks, and hurried towards them. When he came within hearing, he exclaimed,—

"'I am pursued. Can you conceal me?'

"They knew full well that this fugitive must be a

bandit; but there is an innate sympathy between the Roman brigand and the Roman peasant, and the latter is always ready to aid the former. Vampa, without saying a word, hastened to the stone that closed up the entrance to their grotto, drew it away, made a sign to the fugitive to take refuge there, in a retreat unknown to every one, closed the stone upon him, and then went and resumed his seat by Teresa. Instantly afterwards four carbineers on horseback appeared on the edge of the wood; three of them appeared to be looking for the fugitive, whilst the fourth dragged a brigand prisoner by the neck. The three carbineers scrutinized on all sides, saw the young peasants, and, galloping up, interrogated them. They had seen no one.

"'That is very annoying,' said the brigadier, 'for the man we are looking for is the chief.'

"'Cucumetto?' cried Luigi and Teresa at the same moment.

"'Yes,' replied the brigadier; 'and as his head is valued at a thousand Roman crowns, there would have been five hundred for you if you had helped us to catch him.'

"The two young persons exchanged looks. The brigadier had a moment's hope. Five hundred Roman crowns are three thousand francs, and three thousand francs are a fortune for two poor orphans who are going to be married.

"'Yes, it is very annoying,' said Vampa, 'but we have not seen him.'

"Then the carbineers scoured the country in different directions, but in vain; then, after a time, they disappeared. Vampa then removed the stone, and Cucumetto came out. He had seen through the crevices in the granite the two young peasants talking with the carbineers, and guessed the subject of their parley. He had read in the countenances of Luigi and Teresa their steadfast resolution not to surrender him, and he drew from his pocket a purse full of gold, which he offered

to them. But Vampa raised his head proudly; as to Teresa, her eyes sparkled when she thought of all the fine gowns and gay jewellery she could buy with this purse of gold.

"Cucumetto was a cunning fiend, and had assumed the form of a brigand instead of a serpent, and this look of Teresa revealed to him that she was a worthy daughter of Eve; and he returned to the forest, pausing several times on his way, under the pretext of saluting his protectors. Several days elapsed, and they neither saw nor heard of Cucumetto. The time of the Carnival was at hand. The Comte de San-Felice announced a grand masqued ball, to which all that were distinguished in Rome were invited.

"Teresa had a great desire to see this ball. Luigi asked permission of his protector, the steward, that she and he might be present amongst the servants of the house. This was granted.

"The ball was given by the count for the particular pleasure of his daughter Carmela, whom he adored. Carmela was precisely the age and figure of Teresa, and Teresa was as handsome as Carmela. On the evening of the ball Teresa was attired in her best, her most brilliant hair ornaments and gayest glass beads—she was in the costume of the women of Frascati. Luigi wore the very picturesque garb of the Roman peasant at holiday time. They both mixed, as they had leave to do, with the servants and peasants.

"Carmela was attired like a woman of Sonnino. Her cap was embroidered with pearls, the pins in her hair were of gold and diamonds, her girdle was of Turkey silk, with large embroidered flowers, her bodice and skirt were of cachemire, her apron of Indian muslin, and the buttons of her corset were of jewels.

"Carmela wished to make a uniform quadrille, but there was one lady wanting. Carmela looked all around her, but not one of the guests had a costume similar to her own or those of her companions.

"The Comte de San-Felice pointed out to her, in the group of peasants, Teresa, who was hanging on Luigi's arm.

"'Will you allow me, father?' said Carmela.

"'Certainly,' replied the comte; 'are we not in Carnival time?'

"Carmela turned towards the young man who was talking with her, and saying a few words to him, pointed with her finger to Teresa. The young man followed with his eyes the lovely hand which made this indication, bowed in obedience, and then went to Teresa, and invited her to dance in a quadrille, directed by the count's daughter. Teresa felt something like a flame pass over her face. She looked at Luigi, who could not refuse his assent. Luigi slowly relinquished Teresa's arm, which he had held beneath his own, and Teresa, accompanied by her elegant cavalier, took her appointed place with much agitation in the aristocratic quadrille.

"Certainly, in the eyes of an artist, the exact and strict costume of Teresa had a very different character from that of Carmela and her companions; and Teresa was frivolous and coquettish, and thus the embroidery and muslins, the cashmere waist-girdles, all dazzled her, and the reflection of sapphires and diamonds almost turned her giddy brain.

"Luigi felt a sensation, hitherto unknown, arising in his mind. It was like an acute pain which gnawed at his heart, and then passed thrillingly throughout his frame, chasing through his veins and pervading his entire body. He followed with his eye each movement of Teresa and her cavalier. When their hands touched he felt as though he should swoon; every pulse beat with violence; and it seemed as though a bell were ringing in his ears.

"Luigi was jealous! He felt that, influenced by her ambition and coquettish disposition, Teresa might escape him.

"The young peasant girl, at first timid and scared,

soon recovered herself. We have said that Teresa was handsome, but this is not all. Teresa was replete with all those wild graces which are so much more potent than our affected and studied elegances.

"Twice or thrice during the dance the young girl had glanced at Luigi, and each time she saw he was pale and his features agitated—once even the blade of his knife, half drawn from its sheath, had dazzled her eyes with its sinister glare. Thus, it was almost trembling that she resumed her lover's arm.

"The quadrille had been most perfect, and it was evident there was a great demand for a second edition, Carmela alone objecting to it; but the Comte de San-Felice begged his daughter so earnestly that she acceded to it. One of the cavaliers then hastened to invite Teresa, without whom it was impossible the quadrille could be formed, but the young girl had disappeared.

"The truth was that Luigi had not felt the strength to support another such trial, and, half by persuasion and half by force, he had removed Teresa towards another part of the garden. Teresa had yielded in spite of herself, but when she looked at the agitated countenance of the young man she understood by his silence and trembling voice that something strange was passing within him. However, to Teresa's great astonishment, Luigi remained mute, and not a word escaped his lips the rest of the evening. When the chill of the night had driven away the guests from the gardens, and the gates of the villa were closed on them for the fête indoors, he took Teresa quite away, and as he left her at her home, he said,—

"'Teresa, what were you thinking of as you danced opposite the young Comtesse de San-Felice?'

"'I thought,' replied the young girl, with all the frankness of her nature, 'that I would give half my life for a costume such as she wore.'

"'And what said your cavalier to you?'

"'He said it only depended on myself to have it, and I had only one word to say.'

"'He was right,' said Luigi. 'Do you desire it as ardently as you say?'

"'Yes.'

"'Well, then, you shall have it!'

"The young girl, much astonished, raised her head to look at him, but his face was so gloomy and terrible that her words froze to her lips.

"As Luigi spoke thus, he left her. Teresa followed him with her eyes into the darkness as long as she could, and when he had quite disappeared she entered her apartment with a sigh.

"That night a great accident happened, no doubt from the imprudence of some servant who had neglected to extinguish the lights. The Villa de San-Felice took fire in the rooms adjoining the very apartment of the lovely Carmela. Awakened in the night by the light of the flames, she had sprung out of bed, wrapped herself in a dressing-gown, and attempted to escape by the door, but the corridor by which she hoped to fly was already a prey to the flames. She had then returned to her room, calling for help as loudly as she could, when suddenly her window, which was twenty feet from the ground, was opened, a young peasant jumped into the chamber, seized her in his arms, and with superhuman skill and strength conveyed her to the turf of the grass-plot, where she fainted. When she recovered, her father was by her side. All the servants surrounded her, offering her assistance. An entire wing of the villa was burnt down; but what was that as Carmela was safe and uninjured? Her preserver was everywhere sought for, but he did not appear. He was inquired for everywhere, but no one had seen him. Carmela was greatly troubled that she had not recognized him.

"The next day, at the usual hour, the two young peasants were on the borders of the forest. Luigi arrived first. He came towards Teresa in high spirits, and

seemed to have completely forgotten the events of the previous evening. The young girl was very pensive, but seeing Luigi so cheerful, she, on her part, assumed a smiling air, which was natural to her when no excitement of passion came to disturb her.

"Luigi took her arm beneath his own, and led her to the door of the grotto. Then he paused. The young girl, perceiving that there was something extraordinary, looked at him steadfastly.

"'Teresa,' said Luigi, 'yesterday evening you told me you would give all the world to have a costume similar to that of the count's daughter.'

"'Yes,' replied Teresa with astonishment; 'but I was mad to utter such a wish.'

"'And I replied, "Very well; you shall have it."'

"'Yes,' replied the young girl, whose astonishment increased at every word uttered by Luigi; 'but, of course, your reply was only to please me.'

"'I have promised no more than I have given you, Teresa,' said Luigi proudly. 'Go into the grotto and dress yourself.'

"At these words he drew away the stone, and showed Teresa the grotto, lighted up by two wax-lights, which burned on each side of a splendid mirror; on a rustic table made by Luigi were spread out the pearl necklace and the diamond pins, and on a chair at the side was laid the rest of the costume.

"Teresa uttered a cry of joy, and, without inquiring whence this attire came, or even thanking Luigi, darted into the grotto transformed into a dressing-room.

"Luigi pushed the stone behind her, for he saw on the crest of a small adjacent hill, which prevented him from seeing Palestrina from where he was, a traveller on horseback, who stopped a moment, as if uncertain of his road, and thus presented on the blue sky that perfect outline peculiar to the distances of southern climes.

"When he saw Luigi he put his horse into a gallop and advanced towards him. Luigi was not mistaken. The

traveller, who was going from Palestrina to Tivoli, had mistaken his way. The young man directed him; but as at the distance of a quarter of a mile the road again divided into three ways, and on reaching these the traveller might again stray from his route, he begged Luigi to be his guide. Luigi threw his cloak on the ground, placed his carbine on his shoulder, and, freed from his heavy covering, preceded the traveller with the rapid step of a mountaineer, which a horse can scarcely keep up with. In ten minutes Luigi and the traveller reached the cross roads alluded to by the young shepherd. On arriving there, with an air as majestic as that of an emperor, he stretched his hand towards that one of the roads which the traveller was to follow.

"'That is your road, excellency, and now you cannot again mistake.'

"'And here is your recompense,' said the traveller, offering to the young herdsman some pieces of small money.

"'Thank you,' said Luigi, drawing back his hand; 'I render a service; I do not sell it.'

"'Well,' replied the traveller, who seemed used to this difference between the servility of a man of the cities and the pride of the mountaineer, 'if you refuse pay, you will, perhaps, accept of a present?'

"'Ah, yes; that is another thing.'

"'Then,' said the traveller, 'take these two Venice sequins and give them to your betrothed to make herself a pair of earrings.'

"'And do you take this poniard,' said the young herdsman; 'you will not find one better carved between Albana and Civita-Castellana.'

"'I accept it,' answered the traveller; 'but then the obligation will be on my side, for this poniard is worth more than two sequins.'

"'To a dealer, perhaps; but to me, who engraved it myself, it is hardly worth a piastre.'

"'What is your name?' inquired the traveller.

"'Luigi Vampa,' replied the shepherd, with the same air as he would have replied, 'Alexander, king of Macedon.'

"'And yours?'

"'I,' said the traveller, 'am called Sinbad the Sailor.'"

Franz d'Epinay started with surprise.

"Sinbad the Sailor?" he said.

"Yes," replied the narrator; "that was the name which the traveller gave to Vampa as his own."

"Well, and what have you to say against this name?" inquired Albert; "it is a very pretty name, and the adventures of the gentleman of that name amused me very much in my youth, I must confess."

Franz said no more. The name of Sinbad the Sailor, as may well be supposed, awakened in him a world of recollections, as had the name of the Count of Monte-Cristo on the previous evening.

"Proceed," said he to the host.

"Vampa put the two sequins into his pocket, and slowly returned by the way he had come. As he came within two or three hundred paces of the grotto he thought he heard a cry. He listened to know whence this sound could proceed. A moment afterwards and he heard his own name pronounced distinctly. The cry proceeded from the grotto. He bounded like a chamois, cocking his carbine as he went, and in a moment reached the summit of a hill opposite to that on which he had perceived the traveller. Thence cries of help came more distinctly on his ear. He cast his eyes around him, and saw a man carrying off Teresa, as the Centaur Nessus did Dejanira. This man, who was hastening towards the wood, was already three-quarters of the way on the road from the grotto to the forest. Vampa measured the distance. The man was at least two hundred paces in advance of him, and there was not a chance of overtaking him. The young shepherd stopped as if his feet had been rooted to the ground; then he put the butt of his carbine to his shoulder,

took aim at the ravisher, followed him for a second in his track, and then fired. The ravisher stopped suddenly, his knees bent under him, and he fell with Teresa in his arms. The young girl rose instantly, but the man lay on the earth, struggling in the agonies of death. Vampa then rushed towards Teresa; for at ten paces from the dying man her legs had failed her, and she had dropped on her knees, so that the young man feared the ball that had brought down his enemy had also wounded his betrothed. Fortunately she was unscathed, and it was fright alone that had overcome Teresa. When Luigi had assured himself that she was safe and unharmed, he turned towards the wounded man. He had just expired, with clenched hands, his mouth in a spasm of agony, and his hair on end in the agony of death. His eyes remained open and menacing. Vampa approached the carcass and recognized Cucumetto. From the day on which the bandit had been saved by the two young peasants he had been enamoured of Teresa, and had sworn she should be his. From that time he had watched them, and profiting by the moment when her lover had left her alone, whilst he guided the traveller on his way, had carried her off, and believed he at length had her in his power, when the ball, directed by the unerring skill of the young herdsman, had pierced his heart. Vampa gazed on him for a moment without betraying the slightest emotion; whilst, on the contrary, Teresa, shuddering in every limb, dared not approach the slain ruffian but by degrees, and threw a hesitating glance at the dead body over the shoulder of her lover. Suddenly Vampa turned towards his mistress,—

"'Ah, ah!' said he; 'good, good, you are attired; it is now my turn to dress myself.'

"Teresa was clothed from head to foot in the garb of the Comte de San-Felice's daughter. Vampa took Cucumetto's body in his arms and conveyed it to the grotto, whilst in her turn Teresa remained outside. If

a second traveller had passed, he would have seen a strange thing—a shepherdess watching her flock, clad in a cashmere gown, with earrings and necklace of pearls, diamond pins, and buttons of sapphires, emeralds, and rubies. He would, no doubt, have believed that he had returned to the time of Florian, and would have declared, on reaching Paris, that he had met a shepherdess of the Alps seated at the foot of the Sabine Hill. At the end of a quarter of an hour Vampa quitted the grotto. His costume was no less elegant than that of Teresa. He wore a vest of garnet-coloured velvet, with buttons of cut gold; a silk waistcoat covered with embroidery; a Roman scarf tied round his neck; a cartouche-box worked with gold and red and green silk; sky-blue velvet breeches, fastened above the knee with diamond buckles; garters of deer-skin, worked with a thousand arabesques; and a hat, whereon hung ribbons of all colours; two watches hung from his girdle; and a splendid poniard was in his belt. Teresa uttered a cry of admiration. Vampa in this attire resembled a painting by Leopold Robert or Schnetz. He had assumed the entire costume of Cucumetto. The young man saw the effect produced on his betrothed, and a smile of pride passed over his lips.

"'Now,' he said to Teresa, 'are you ready to share my fortune, whatever it may be?'

"'Oh yes!' exclaimed the young girl enthusiastically.

"'And follow me wherever I go?'

"'To the world's end.'

"'Then take my arm and let us on; we have no time to lose.'

"The young girl did so without questioning her lover as to where he was conducting her, for he appeared to her at this moment as handsome, proud, and powerful as a god. They went towards the forest, and soon entered it. We need scarcely say that all the paths of the mountain were known to Vampa. He therefore went forward without a moment's hesitation, although

there was no beaten track; but he knew his path by looking at the trees and bushes, and thus they kept on advancing for nearly an hour and a half. At the end of this time they had reached the thickest of the forest. A torrent, whose bed was dry, led into a deep gorge. Vampa took this wild road, which, enclosed between two ridges and shadowed by the tufted foliage of the pines, seemed, but for the difficulties of its descent, that path to Avernus of which Virgil speaks. Teresa had become alarmed at the wild and deserted look of the plain around her, and pressed closely against her guide, not uttering a syllable; but as she saw him advance with even step and composed countenance she endeavoured to repress her emotion. Suddenly, about ten paces from them, a man advanced from behind a tree and aimed at Vampa.

"'Not another step,' he said, 'or you are a dead man.'

"'What, then,' said Vampa, raising his hand with a gesture of disdain, whilst Teresa, no longer able to restrain her alarm, clung closely to him, 'do wolves rend each other?'

"'Who are you?' inquired the sentinel.

"'I am Luigi Vampa, shepherd of the farm of San-Felice.'

"'What do you want?'

"'I would speak with your companions who are in the recess at Rocca Bianca'

"'Follow me, then,' said the sentinel; 'or, as you know your way, go first.'

"Vampa smiled disdainfully at this precaution of the bandit, went in front with Teresa, and continued to advance with the same firm and easy step as before. At the end of ten minutes the bandit made them a sign to stop. The two young persons obeyed. Then the bandit thrice imitated the cry of a crow; a croak answered this signal.

"'Good!' said the sentry; 'you may now advance.'

"Luigi and Teresa again set forward. As they advanced, Teresa clung tremblingly to her lover, as she saw

through the trees arms appear and the barrels of carbines shine. The retreat of Rocca Bianca was at the top of a small mountain, which no doubt in former days had been a volcano—an extinct volcano before the days when Remus and Romulus had deserted Alba to come and found the city of Rome. Teresa and Luigi reached the summit, and all at once found themselves in the presence of twenty bandits.

"'Here is a young man who seeks and wishes to speak to you,' said the sentinel.

"'What has he to say?' inquired the man who was in command in the chief's absence.

"'I wish to say that I am tired of a shepherd's life,' was Vampa's reply.

"'Ah, I understand,' said the lieutenant; 'and you seek admittance into our ranks?'

"'Welcome!' cried several bandits of Ferrusino, Pampinara, and Anagni, who had recognized Luigi Vampa.

"'Yes; but I come to ask something more than to be your companion.'

"'And what may that be?' inquired the bandits with astonishment.

"'I come to ask to be your captain,' said the young man.

"The bandits shouted with laughter.

"'And what have you done to aspire to this honour?' demanded the lieutenant.

"'I have killed your chief, Cucumetto, whose dress I now wear; and I set fire to the Villa San-Felice to procure a wedding-dress for my betrothed.'

"An hour afterwards Luigi Vampa was chosen captain, *vice* Cucumetto deceased."

"Well, my dear Albert," said Franz, turning towards his friend, "what think you of citizen Luigi Vampa?"

"I say he is a myth," replied Albert, "and never had an existence."

"And you say that Maître Vampa exercises his profession at this moment in the environs of Rome?"

"And with a boldness of which no bandit before him ever gave an example."

"Then the police have vainly tried to lay hands on him?"

"Why, you see, he has a good understanding with the shepherds in the plains, the fishermen of the Tiber, and the smugglers of the coast. They seek for him in the mountains, and he is on the waters; they follow him on the waters, and he is on the open sea; then they pursue him, and he has suddenly taken refuge in the isle of Giglio, of Guanouti, or Monte-Cristo; and when they hunt for him there, he reappears suddenly at Albano, Tivoli, or La Riccia."

"And how does he behave towards travellers?"

"Alas! his plan is very simple. It depends on the distance he may be from the city whether he gives eight hours, twelve hours, or a day wherein to pay their ransom; and when that time has elapsed he allows another hour's grace. At the sixtieth minute of this hour, if the money is not forthcoming, he blows out the prisoner's brains with a pistol-shot or plants a dagger in his heart, and that settles the account."

"Well, Albert," inquired Franz of his companion, "are you still disposed to go to the Colosseum by the outer boulevards?"

"Perfectly," said Albert, "if the way be picturesque."

The clock struck nine as the door opened and a coachman appeared.

"Excellencies," said he, "the coach is ready."

"Well, then," said Franz, "let us to the Colosseum."

"By the Porto del Popolo, or by the streets, your excellencies?"

"By the streets, *morbleu!* by the streets," cried Franz.

"Ah, my dear fellow!" said Albert, rising and light-

ing his third cigar; "really, I thought you had more courage."

So saying, the two young men went down the staircase, and got into the carriage.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE COLOSSEUM.

THE carriage stopped near the Meta Sudans, the door was opened, and the young men, eagerly alighting, found themselves opposite a cicerone, who appeared to have sprung up from the ground, so unexpected was his appearance.

As for Albert and Franz, they essayed not to escape from their ciceronian tyrants. And, indeed, it would have been so much the more difficult to break their bondage, as the guides alone are permitted to visit these monuments with torches in their hands. Thus, then, the young men made no attempt at resistance, but blindly and confidingly surrendered themselves into the care and custody of their conductors. Albert had already made seven or eight similar excursions to the Colosseum, while his less favoured companion trod for the first time in his life the classic ground forming the monument of Flavius Vespasian, and, to his credit be it spoken, his mind, even amid the glib loquacity of the guides, was duly and deeply touched with awe and enthusiastic admiration of all he saw.

Franz had remained for nearly a quarter of an hour perfectly hidden by the shadow of the vast column at whose base he had found a resting-place, and from whence his eyes followed the motions of Albert and his guides, who, holding torches in their hands, had emerged from a vomitorium placed at the opposite extremity of the Colosseum, and then again disappeared down the steps conducting to the seats reserved for the Vestal virgins,

resembling, as they glided along, some restless shades following the flickering glare of so many *ignes fatui*, when all at once his ear caught a sound resembling that of a stone rolling down the staircase opposite the one by which he had himself ascended. There was nothing remarkable in the circumstance of a morsel of granite giving way and falling heavily below; but it seemed to him that the substance that fell gave way beneath the pressure of a foot, and also that some one, who endeavoured as much as possible to prevent his footsteps from being heard, was approaching the spot where he sat. Conjecture soon became certainty, for the figure of a man was distinctly visible to Franz, gradually emerging from the staircase opposite, upon which the moon was at that moment pouring a full tide of silvery brightness.

The person whose mysterious arrival had attracted the attention of Franz stood in a kind of half-light that rendered it impossible to distinguish his features, although his dress was easily made out. He wore a large brown mantle, one fold of which, thrown over his left shoulder, served likewise to mask the lower part of his countenance, while the upper part was completely hidden by his broad-brimmed hat. The lower part of his dress was more distinctly visible by the bright rays of the moon, which, entering through the broken ceiling, shed their refulgent beams on feet cased in elegantly made boots of polished leather, over which descended fashionably cut trousers of black cloth.

From the imperfect means Franz had of judging, he could only come to one conclusion—that the individual whom he was thus watching certainly belonged to no inferior station of life. Some few minutes had elapsed, and the stranger began to show manifest signs of impatience, when a slight noise was heard outside the aperture in the roof, and almost immediately a dark shadow seemed to obstruct the flood of light that had entered from it, and the figure of a man was clearly seen

gazing with eager scrutiny on the immense space beneath him; then as his eye caught sight of the individual in the mantle, he grasped a floating mass of thickly-matted boughs, and glided down by their help to within three or four feet of the ground, and then leaped lightly on his feet. The man who had performed this daring act with so much indifference wore the costume of Transtevere.

"I beg your excellency's pardon for keeping you waiting," said the man in the Roman dialect, "but I don't think I'm many minutes after my time; ten o'clock has just struck by the clock of Saint-Jean-de-Latran."

"Say not a word about being late," replied the stranger in purest Tuscan. "'Tis I who am too soon; but even if you had caused me to wait a little while, I should have felt quite sure that the delay was not occasioned by any fault of yours."

"Your excellency is perfectly right in so thinking," said the man. "I came here direct from the Château Saint-Ange, and I had an immense deal of trouble before I could get to speak to Beppo."

"And who is Beppo?"

"Oh, Beppo is employed in the prison, and I give him so much a year to let me know what is going on within his holiness's château."

"Indeed; you are a provident person, I see."

"Why, you see, no one knows what may happen. Perhaps some of these days I may be entrapped like poor Peppino, and may be very glad to have some little nibbling mouse to gnaw the meshes of my net, and so help me out of prison."

"Briefly, what news did you glean?"

"That two executions of considerable interest will take place the day after to-morrow at two o'clock, as is customary at Rome at the commencement of all great festivals. One of the culprits will be *mazzolato*. He is an atrocious villain, who murdered the priest who

brought him up, and deserves not the smallest pity. The other sufferer is sentenced to be *decapitato*, and he, your excellency, is poor Peppino."

"The fact is that you have inspired not only the pontifical government but also the neighbouring states with such extreme fear that they are glad of an opportunity of making an example."

"But Peppino did not even belong to my band. He was merely a poor shepherd, whose only crime consisted in furnishing us with provisions."

"My good friend," said the man in the cloak, "excuse me for saying that you seem to me precisely in the mood to commit some wild or extravagant act."

"Perhaps I am; but one thing I have resolved on, and that is to stop at nothing to restore a poor devil to liberty, who has got into this scrape solely from having served me. I should hate and despise myself as a coward did I desert the brave fellow in his present extremity."

"And what do you mean to do?"

"To surround the scaffold with twenty of my best men, who, at a signal from me, will rush forward directly Peppino is brought for execution, and, by the assistance of their stilettos, drive back the guard and carry off the prisoner."

"That seems to me as hazardous as uncertain, and convinces me my scheme is far better than yours."

"And what is your excellency's project?"

"Just this. I will so advantageously bestow 2,000 piastres that the person receiving them shall obtain a respite till next year for Peppino, and during that year another skilfully placed 1,000 piastres shall afford him the means of escaping from his prison."

"And do you feel sure of succeeding?"

"*Pardieu!*" exclaimed the man in the cloak, suddenly expressing himself in French.

"What did your excellency say?" inquired the other.

"I said, my good fellow, that I would do more single-handed by the means of gold than you and all your

troop could effect with stilettos, pistols, carbines, and blunderbusses included. Leave me, then, to act, and have no fears for the result."

"At least there can be no harm in myself and party being in readiness, in case your excellency should fail."

"None whatever. Take what precautions you please, if it is any satisfaction to you to do so; but rely upon my obtaining the reprieve I seek."

"Remember, the execution is fixed for the day after to-morrow, and that you have but one day to work in."

"And what then? Is not a day divided into twenty-four hours, each hour into sixty minutes, and every minute subdivided into sixty seconds? Now in 86,400 seconds very many things can be done."

"And how shall I know whether your excellency has succeeded or not?"

"Oh, that is very easily arranged. I have engaged the three lower windows at the Café Rospoli. Should I have obtained the requisite pardon for Peppino, the two outside windows will be hung with yellow damasks, and the centre with white, having a large cross in red marked on it."

"And whom will you employ to carry the reprieve to the officer directing the execution?"

"Send one of your men disguised as a penitent friar, and I will give it to him. His dress will procure him the means of approaching the scaffold itself, and he will deliver the official order to the officer, who in his turn will hand it to the executioner. In the meantime, it will be as well to acquaint Peppino with what we have determined on, if it be only to prevent his dying of fear or losing his senses, because in either case a very useless expense will have been incurred."

"Your excellency," said the man, "you are fully persuaded of my entire devotion to you, are you not?"

"Nay, I flatter myself that there can be no doubt of it," replied the cavalier in the cloak.

"Well, then, only fulfil your promise of rescuing

Peppino, and henceforward you shall receive not only devotedness but the most absolute obedience from myself and those under me that one human being can render to another."

"Have a care how far you pledge yourself, my good friend, for I may remind you of your promises at some perhaps not very distant period, when I, in my turn, may require your aid and influence."

"Let that day come sooner or later, your excellency will find me what I have found you in this my heavy trouble; and if from the other end of the world you but write me word to do such or such a thing, conclude it done, for done it shall be, on the word and faith of ——"

"Hush!" interrupted the stranger; "I hear a noise."

"'Tis some travellers who are visiting the Colosseum by torchlight."

"'Twere better we should not be seen together. Those guides are nothing but spies and might possibly recognize you; and however I may be honoured by your friendship, my worthy friend, if once the extent of our intimacy were known, I am sadly afraid both my reputation and credit would suffer thereby."

"Well, then, if you obtain the reprieve?"

"The middle window at the Café Rospoli will be hung with white damask bearing on it a red cross."

"And if you fail?"

"Then all three windows will have yellow draperies."

"And then?"

"And then, my good fellow, use your daggers in any way you please; and I further promise you to be there as a spectator of your prowess."

"All is, then, understood between us. Adieu, your excellency; depend upon me as firmly as I do upon you."

Saying these words, the Transtevere disappeared down the staircase, while his companion, muffling his features more closely than before in the folds of his mantle, passed almost close to Franz, and descended to the arena by an

outward flight of steps. The next minute Franz heard himself called by Albert, who made the lofty building re-echo with the sound of his friend's name. In ten minutes from the parting of the strangers Franz was on the road to the Hotel d'Espagne. He longed to be alone, and able undisturbedly to ponder over all that had occurred.

One of the two men whose mysterious rendezvous in the Colosseum he had so unintentionally witnessed was an entire stranger to him, but not so the other; and though Franz had been unable to distinguish his features, from his being either wrapped in his mantle or obscured by the shadow, the tones of his voice had made too powerful an impression on him the first time he heard them for him ever again to forget them, hear them when or where he might. It was more especially when speaking in a manner half jesting, half bitter, that Franz's ear recalled most vividly the deep, sonorous, yet well-pitched voice that had spoken to him in the grotto of Monte-Cristo, and which he heard for the second time amid the darkness and ruined grandeur of the Colosseum. And the more he thought, the more entire was his conviction that the individual in the mantle was no other than his former host and entertainer, "Sinbad the Sailor."

In vain did Franz endeavour to forget the many perplexing thoughts which assailed him, in vain did he court the refreshment of sleep. Slumber refused to visit his eyelids, and his night was passed in feverish contemplation of the chain of circumstances tending to prove the individuality of the mysterious visitant to the Colosseum and the inhabitant of the grotto of Monte-Cristo, and the more he thought the firmer grew his opinion on the subject. Worn out at length, he fell asleep at daybreak, and did not awake till late. Like a genuine Frenchman, Albert had employed his time in arranging for the evening's diversion. He had sent to engage a box at the Teatro Argentino, and Franz,

having a number of letters to write, relinquished the carriage to Albert for the whole of the day.

The Carnival was to commence on the morrow; therefore Albert had not an instant to lose in setting forth the programme of his hopes, expectations, and claims to notice. With this design, he had engaged a box in the most conspicuous part of the theatre, and exerted himself to set off his personal attractions by the aid of the most *recherchée* and elaborate toilet. The box taken by Albert was in the first circle.

The anticipated pleasures of the Carnival, with the "holy week" that was to succeed it, so filled every fair breast as to prevent the least attention being bestowed even on the business of the stage. The actors made their entries and exits unobserved or unthought of. At certain conventional moments the spectators would suddenly cease their conversation, or rouse themselves from their musings to listen to some brilliant effort of Moriani's, a well-executed recitative by Coselli, or to join in loud applause at the wonderful powers of La Spech; but, that momentary excitement over, they quickly relapsed into their former state of preoccupation or interesting conversation. Towards the close of the first act, the door of a box which had been hitherto vacant was opened; a lady entered to whom Franz had been introduced in Paris, where, indeed, he had imagined she still was. The quick eye of Albert caught the involuntary start with which his friend beheld the new arrival, and turning to him, he said hastily,—

"Do you know the female who has just entered the box?"

"Yes; what do you think of her?"

"Oh, she is perfectly lovely—what a complexion! And such magnificent hair! Is she French?"

"No; a Venetian."

"And her name is——"

"Countess G——."

"Ah! I know her by name," exclaimed Albert;

"she is said to possess as much wit and cleverness as beauty. I was to have been presented to her when I met her at Madame Villefort's ball."

"Shall I assist you in repairing your negligence?" asked Franz.

"My dear fellow, are you really on such good terms with her as to venture to take me to her box?"

"Why, I have only had the honour of being in her society and conversing with her three or four times in my life; but you know that even such an acquaintance as that might warrant my doing what you ask."

At this instant the countess perceived Franz, and graciously waved her hand to him, to which he replied by a respectful inclination of the head.

"Upon my word," said Albert, "you seem to be on excellent terms with the beautiful countess!"

The curtain at length fell on the performances, to the infinite satisfaction of the Viscount de Morcerf, who seized his hat, rapidly passed his fingers through his hair, arranged his cravat and wristbands, and signified to Franz that he was waiting for him to lead the way.

Franz, who had mutely interrogated the countess, and received from her a gracious smile in token that he would be welcome, sought not to retard the gratification of Albert's eager impatience, but commenced at once the tour of the house, closely followed by Albert, who availed himself of the few minutes it occupied to reach the opposite side of the theatre to settle the height and smoothness of his collar, and to arrange the lappets of his coat. This important task was just completed as they arrived at the countess's box. At the knock the door was immediately opened, and the young man who was seated beside the countess in the front of the *loge*, in obedience to the Italian custom, instantly rose and surrendered his place to the strangers, who, in turn, would be expected to retire upon the arrival of other visitors.

Franz presented Albert as one of the most distinguished young men of the day, both as regarded his position in society and extraordinary talents. The countess in reply bowed gracefully to Albert, and extended her hand with cordial kindness to Franz; then, inviting Albert to take the vacant seat beside her, she recommended Franz to take the next best, if he wished to view the ballet, and pointed to the one behind her own chair. Albert was soon deeply engrossed in discoursing upon Paris and Paris matters, speaking to the countess of the various persons they both knew there. Franz perceived how completely he was in his element; and, unwilling to interfere with the pleasure he so evidently felt, took up Albert's enormous lorgnette, and began in his turn to survey the audience. Sitting alone, in the front of a box immediately opposite, but situated on the third row, was a female of exquisite beauty, dressed in a Greek costume, which it was evident, from the ease and grace with which she wore it, was her national attire. Behind her, but in deep shadow, was the outline of a male figure; but the features of this latter personage it was not possible to distinguish. Franz could not forbear breaking in upon the apparently interesting conversation passing between the countess and Albert, to inquire of the former if she knew who was the fair Albanaise opposite, since beauty such as hers was well worthy of being remarked by either sex.

"All I can tell you about her," replied the countess, "is that she has been at Rome since the beginning of the season; for I saw her where she now sits the very first night of the theatre's opening, and since then she has never missed a performance, sometimes accompanied by the individual who is with her, and at others merely attended by a black servant."

"And what do you think of her personal appearance?"

"Oh, I consider her perfectly lovely—she is just my idea of what Medora must have been."

Franz and the countess exchanged a smile, and then

the latter resumed her conversation with Albert, while Franz returned to his previous survey of the house and company. The curtain rose on the ballet, which was one of these excellent specimens of the Italian school, admirably arranged and put on the stage by Henri.

Most of my readers are aware that the second act of "Parisina" opens with the celebrated and effective duet, in which Parisina, while sleeping, betrays to Azzo the secret of her love for Ugo. Franz now listened to it for the third time, yet its notes, so tenderly expressive and fearfully grand, as the wretched husband and wife gave vent to their different griefs and passions, thrilled through the soul of Franz with an effect equal to his first emotions upon hearing it. Excited beyond his usual calm demeanour, Franz rose with the audience, and was about to join the loud enthusiastic applause that followed, but suddenly his purpose was arrested, his hands fell by his sides, and the half-uttered "bravos" expired on his lips.

The occupant of the box in which the Greek girl sat appeared to share the universal animation that prevailed, for he left his seat to stand up in the front, so that, his countenance being fully revealed, Franz had no difficulty in recognizing him as the mysterious inhabitant of Monte-Cristo, and the very same individual he had encountered the preceding evening in the ruins of the Colosseum, and whose voice and figure had seemed so familiar to him. All doubt of his identity was now at an end; his singular host evidently resided at Rome. The surprise and agitation occasioned by this full confirmation of Franz's former suspicion had, no doubt, imparted a corresponding expression to his features; for the countess, after gazing with a puzzled look on his speaking countenance, burst into a fit of laughter, and begged to know what had happened.

"Madame la Comtesse," returned Franz, totally unheeding her raillery, "I asked you a short time since if you knew any particulars respecting the Albanian lady

opposite; I must now beseech you to inform me who and what is her husband."

"Nay," answered the countess, "I know no more of him than yourself."

"Perhaps you never before remarked him?"

"What a question!—so truly French! Do you not know that we Italians have eyes only for the man we love?"

"True," replied Franz.

"All I can say," continued the countess, taking up the lorgnette and directing it to the box in question, "is that the gentleman, whose history I am unable to furnish, seems to me as though he had just been dug up; he looks more like a corpse permitted by some friendly grave-digger to quit his tomb for a while, and revisit this earth of ours, than anything human. How ghastly pale he is!"

"Oh, he is always as colourless as you now see him," said Franz.

"Then you know him?" almost screamed the countess. "Oh, pray do, for heaven's sake, tell us all about—— Is he a vampire or a resuscitated corpse, or what?"

"I fancy I have seen him before; and I even think he recognizes me."

"And I can well understand," said the countess, shrugging up her beautiful shoulders, as though an involuntary shudder passed through her veins, "that those who have once seen that man will never be likely to forget him."

"I must positively find out who and what he is," said Franz, rising from his seat.

"No, no," cried the countess, "you must not leave me. I depend upon you to escort me home. Oh, indeed I cannot permit you to go."

"Is it possible," whispered Franz, "that you entertain any fear?"

"I'll tell you," answered the countess. "Byron had the most perfect belief in the existence of vampires, and even assured me he had seen some. The descrip-

tion he gave me perfectly corresponds with the features and character of the man before us. Oh, it is the exact personification of what I have been led to expect. The coal-black hair, large, bright, glittering eyes, in which a wild, unearthly fire seems burning—the same ghastly paleness. Then observe, too, that the very female he has with him is altogether unlike all others of her sex. She is a foreigner—a stranger. Nobody knows who she is or where she comes from. No doubt she belongs to the same horrible race as he does, and is, like himself, a dealer in magical arts. I entreat of you not to go near him—at least to-night; and if to-morrow your curiosity still continues as great, pursue your researches if you will, but to-night you neither can nor shall. For that purpose I mean to keep you all to myself."

Franz protested he could not defer his pursuit till the following day, for many reasons.

"Listen to me," said the countess, "and do not be so very headstrong. I am going home. I have a party at my house to-night and therefore cannot possibly remain till the conclusion of the opera. Now, I cannot for one instant believe you so devoid of gallantry as to refuse a lady your escort when she even condescends to ask you for it."

There was nothing else left for Franz to do but to take up his hat, open the door of the *loge*, and offer the countess his arm.

It was quite evident, by the countess's manner, that her uneasiness was not feigned, and Franz himself could not resist a species of superstitious dread—so much the stronger in him, as it arose from a variety of corroborating recollections, while the terror of the countess sprang from an instinctive feeling, originally created in her mind by the wild tales she had listened to till she believed them truths. Franz could even feel her arm tremble as he assisted her into the carriage.

Upon arriving at her hôtel, Franz perceived that she had deceived him when she spoke of expecting company;

on the contrary, her own return before the appointed hour seemed greatly to astonish the domestics.

"Excuse my little subterfuge," said the countess, in reply to her companion's half-reproachful observation on the subject; "but that horrid man had made me feel quite uncomfortable, and I longed to be alone that I might compose my startled mind."

Franz essayed to smile.

"Nay," said she, "smile not; it ill accords with the expression of your countenance, and I am sure it springs not from your heart. However, promise me one thing."

"What is it?"

"Promise me, I say."

"I will do anything you desire, except relinquish my determination of finding out who this man is. I have more reason than you can imagine for desiring to know who he is, from whence he came, and whither he is going."

"Where he comes from I am ignorant; but I can readily tell you where he is going to, and that is down below, without the least doubt."

"Let us speak only of the promise you wished me to make," said Franz.

"Well, then, you must give me your word to return immediately to your hôtel, and make no attempt to follow this man to-night." So saying, the countess quitted Franz, leaving him unable to decide whether she were merely amusing herself at his expense or whether her fears and agitations were genuine.

Upon his return to the hotel, Franz found Albert in his dressing gown and slippers, listlessly extended on a sofa, smoking a cigar.

"My dear fellow," cried he, springing up, "is it really you? Why I did not expect to see you before to-morrow."

"My dear Albert," replied Franz, "I am glad of this opportunity to tell you once and for ever that you entertain a most erroneous notion concerning Italian

females. I should have thought the continual failures you have met with in all your own love affairs might have taught you better by this time."

"Upon my soul, these women would puzzle the very devil to read them aright. Why, here—they give you their hand—they press yours in return—they keep up a whispering conversation—permit you to accompany them home! Why, if a Parisian were to indulge in a quarter of these marks of flattering attention her reputation would be gone for ever."

"And the very reason why the females of this fine country put so little restraint on their words and actions is because they live so much in public, and have really nothing to conceal. Besides, you must have perceived that the countess was really alarmed."

"At what? At the sight of that respectable gentleman sitting opposite to us in the same *loge* as the lovely Greek girl? Now, for my part, I met them in the lobby after the conclusion of the piece, and, hang me, if I can guess where you took your notions of the other world from! I can assure you that this hobgoblin of yours is a deuced fine-looking fellow—admirably dressed."

"Well, that tends to confirm my own ideas," said Franz, "that the countess's suspicions were destitute alike of sense and reason. Did he speak in your hearing, and did you catch any of his words?"

"I did; but they were uttered in the Romaic dialect. I knew that from the mixture of Greek words. I don't know whether I ever told you that when I was at college I was rather—rather 'strong in Greek.'"

"He spoke the Romaic language, did he?"

"I think so."

"That settles it," murmured Franz. "'Tis he, past all doubt."

"What do you say?"

"Nothing, nothing. But tell me, what were you thinking about when I came in?"

"Oh, I was arranging a little surprise for you."

"Indeed! Of what nature?"

"Why, you know it is quite impossible to procure a carriage."

"Certainly; and I also know that we have done all that human means afforded to endeavour to get one."

"Now, then, in this difficulty, a bright idea has flashed across my brain."

Franz looked at Albert as though he had not much confidence in the suggestions of his imagination.

"I tell you what, M. Franz," cried Albert, "you deserve to be called out for such a misgiving and incredulous glance as that you were pleased to bestow on me just now."

"And I promise to give you the satisfaction of a gentleman if your scheme turns out as ingenious as you assert."

"Well, then, hearken to me."

"I listen."

"You agree, do you not, that obtaining a carriage is out of the question?"

"I do."

"Neither can we procure horses?"

"True; we have offered any sums, but have failed."

"Well, now, what do you say to a cart? I dare say such a thing might be had."

"Very possibly."

"And a pair of oxen?"

"As easily found as the cart."

"Then you see, my good fellow, with a cart and a couple of oxen our business can be managed. The cart must be tastefully ornamented; and if you and I dress ourselves as Neapolitan reapers, we may get up a striking tableau, after the manner of that splendid picture by Leopold Robert. It would add greatly to the effect if the countess would join us in the costume of a peasant from Puzzoli or Sorento. Our group would then be quite complete, more especially as the countess is quite beautiful enough to represent the 'Mother with Child.'"

At this instant the door opened, and the head of Maître Pastrini appeared.

"*Permesso?*" inquired he.

"Certainly—certainly," cried Franz. "Come in, mine host."

"Now, then," asked Albert eagerly, "have you found the desired cart and oxen?"

"Better than that!" replied the Maître Pastrini, with the air of a man perfectly well satisfied with himself.

"Take care, my worthy host," said Albert; "*better* is a sure enemy to *well*."

"Let your excellencies only leave the matter to me," returned Maître Pastrini, in a tone indicative of unbounded self-confidence.

"But what *have* you done?" asked Franz. "Speak out, there's a worthy fellow."

"Your excellencies are aware," responded the landlord, swelling with importance, "that the Count of Monte-Cristo is living on the same floor with yourselves?"

"I should think we did know it," exclaimed Albert, "since it is owing to that circumstance that we are packed into these small rooms, like two poor students in the back streets of Paris."

"Well, then, the Count of Monte-Cristo, hearing of the dilemma in which you are placed, has sent to offer you seats in his carriage and two places at his windows in the Palace Rospoli."

The friends looked at each other with unutterable surprise.

"But do you think," asked Franz, "that we ought to accept such offers from a perfect stranger?"

"What sort of person is this Count of Monte-Cristo?" asked Franz of his host.

"A very great nobleman, but whether Maltese or Sicilian I cannot exactly say; but this I know, that he is noble as a Borghese, and rich as a gold mine."

"It seems to me," said Franz, speaking in an under-

tone to Albert, "that if this individual merited the high panegyrics of our landlord, he would have conveyed his invitation through another channel, and not permitted it to be brought to us in this unceremonious way. He would have written — or — ."

At this instant some one knocked at the door.

"Come in!" said Franz.

A servant, wearing a livery of considerable style and richness, appeared at the threshold, and placing two cards in the landlord's hands, who forthwith presented them to the two young men, he said, "Please to deliver these, from M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo to M. le Vicomte Albert de Morcerf and M. Franz d'Épinay. M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo," continued the servant, "begs these gentlemen's permission to wait upon them as their neighbour, and he will be honoured by an intimation of what time they will please to receive him."

"Faith, Franz," whispered Albert, "there is not much to find fault with here."

"Tell the count," replied Franz, "that we will do ourselves the pleasure of calling on him."

The servant bowed and retired.

"That is what I call an elegant mode of attack," said Albert. "You were quite correct in what you stated, Maître Pastrini. The Count of Monte-Cristo is unquestionably a man of first-rate breeding and knowledge of the world."

"Then you accept his offer?" said the host.

"Of course we do," replied Albert. "Still I must own I am sorry to be obliged to give up the cart and the group of reapers — it would have produced such an effect. And were it not for the windows at the Palace Rospoli, by way of recompense for the loss of our beautiful scheme, I don't know but what I should have held on by my original plan. What say you, Franz?"

"Oh, I agree with you; the windows in the Palace Rospoli alone decided me."

The truth was, that the mention of two places in the

Palace Rospoli had recalled to Franz's mind the conversation he had overheard the preceding evening in the ruins of the Colosseum between the mysterious unknown and the Transtevere, in which the stranger in the cloak had undertaken to obtain the freedom of a condemned criminal; and if this muffled-up individual proved, as Franz felt sure he would, the same as the person he had just seen in the Teatro Argentino, then he should be able to establish his identity, and also to prosecute his researches respecting him with perfect facility and freedom. Eight o'clock found Franz up and dressed. The first act of Franz was to summon his landlord, who presented himself with his accustomed obsequiousness.

"Now, my excellent Maître Pastrini," said Franz, addressing his landlord, "since we are both ready, do you think we may proceed at once to visit the Count of Monte-Cristo?"

"Most assuredly," replied he. "The Count of Monte-Cristo is always an early riser; and I can answer for his having been up these two hours."

"Then you really consider we shall not be intruding if we pay our respects to him directly?"

"Oh, I am quite sure. I will take all the blame on myself if you find I have led you into an error."

"Well, then, if it be so; are you ready, Albert?"

"Perfectly!"

"Let us go and return our best thanks for his courtesy."

"Yes, let us do so."

The landlord preceded the friends across the landing, which was all that separated them from the apartments of the count, rang at a bell, and upon the door being opened by a servant, said,—

"*I Signori Francesi.*"

The domestic bowed respectfully, and invited them to enter. They passed through two rooms, furnished with a style and luxury they had not calculated on finding under the roof of Maître Pastrini, and were

shown into an elegantly fitted-up saloon. The richest Turkey carpets covered the floor, and the softest and most inviting couches, *bergères*, and sofas offered their high-piled and yielding cushions to such as desired repose or refreshment. Splendid paintings by the first masters were ranged against the walls, intermingled with magnificent trophies of war, while heavy curtains of costly tapestry were suspended before the different doors of the room.

"If your excellencies will please to be seated," said the man, "I will let M. le Comte know you are here."

And with these words he disappeared behind one of the tapestried *portières*. Franz and Albert looked inquiringly at each other, then at the gorgeous fittings-up of the apartment. All seemed even more splendid at a second view than it had done at their first rapid survey.

"Well," said Franz to his friend, "what think you of all this?"

"Why, upon my soul, my dear fellow, it strikes me our elegant and attentive neighbour must either be some successful stock-jobber who has speculated in the fall of the Spanish funds, or some prince travelling *incog.*"

"Hush, hush!" replied Franz, "we shall ascertain who and what he is—he comes!"

As Franz spoke he heard the sound of a door turning on its hinges, and almost immediately afterwards the tapestry was drawn aside, and the owner of all these riches stood before the two young men. Albert instantly rose to meet him, but Franz remained in a manner spell-bound on his chair, for in the person of him who had just entered he recognized not only the mysterious visitant to the Colosseum and the occupant of the *loge* at the Salle Argentino, but also his singular host of Monte-Cristo.

CHAPTER XXXV.

LA MAZZOLATA.

"GENTLEMEN," said the Count of Monte-Cristo as he entered, "I pray you excuse me for suffering my visit to be anticipated; but I feared to disturb you by presenting myself earlier at your apartments; besides, you sent me word you would come to me, and I have held myself at your disposal."

"Franz and I have to thank you a thousand times, M. le Comte," returned Albert. "You extricate us from a great dilemma, and we were on the point of inventing some very fantastic vehicle when your friendly invitation reached us."

"Indeed!" returned the count, motioning the two young men to sit down. "It was the fault of that blockhead Pastrini that I did not sooner assist you in your distress. He did not mention a syllable of your embarrassment to me, when he knows that, alone and isolated as I am, I seek every opportunity of making the acquaintance of my neighbours. As soon as I learned I could in any way assist you, I most eagerly seized the opportunity of offering my services."

The two young men bowed. Franz had, as yet, found nothing to say. He had adopted no determination; and as nothing in the count's manner manifested the wish that he should recognize him, he did not know whether to make any allusion to the past or wait until he had more proof.

However, he resolved to lead the conversation to a subject which might possibly clear up his doubts.

"M. le Comte," said he, "you have offered us places in your carriage and at your windows of the Rospoli Palace. Can you tell us where we can obtain a sight of the Place del Popolo?"

"Ah," said the count negligently, looking attentively

at Morcerf, "is there not something like an execution upon the Place del Popolo?"

"Yes," returned Franz, finding that the count was coming to the point he wished.

"Stay, I think I told my steward yesterday to attend to this. Perhaps I can render you this slight service also."

He extended his hand, and rang the bell thrice.

"Did you ever occupy yourself," said he to Franz, "with the employment of time and the means of simplifying the summoning of your servants? I have. When I ring once, it is for my valet; twice, for my maître d'hôtel; thrice, for my steward. Thus I do not waste a minute or a word. Here he is!" A man of about five-and-forty to fifty entered, exactly resembling the smuggler who had introduced Franz into the cavern, but he did not appear to recognize him. It was evident he had his orders.

"M. Bertuccio," said the count, "have you procured me windows looking on the Place del Popolo, as I ordered you yesterday?"

"Yes, excellency," returned the steward, "but it was very late."

"Did I not tell you I wished for one?" replied the count, frowning.

"And your excellency has one, which was let to Prince Lobanieff, but I was obliged to pay a hundred——"

"That will do—that will do, Monsieur Bertuccio; spare these gentlemen all such domestic arrangements. You have the window; that is sufficient. Give orders to the coachman, and be in readiness on the stairs to conduct us to it.—Gentlemen, we will now breakfast."

As he spoke, a servant opened one of the four doors of the salon, saying,

"*Al suo commodo!*"

The two young men rose and entered the breakfast-room.

During the meal, which was excellent and admirably

served, Franz looked repeatedly at Albert in order to remark the impression which he doubted not had been made on him by their entertainer; but, whether with his usual carelessness he had paid but little attention to him, whether the explanation of the Count of Monte-Cristo with regard to duelling had satisfied him, or whether the events which Franz knew of had a double effect on him alone, he remarked that his companion did not pay the least regard to them, but on the contrary ate like a man who for the last four of five months had been condemned to partake of Italian cookery—that is, the worst in the world. As for the count, he just touched the dishes. He seemed as if he fulfilled the duties of an entertainer by sitting down with his guests, and awaited their departure to be served with some strange or more delicate food. This brought back to Franz, in spite of himself, the recollection of the terror with which the count had inspired the Countess G——, and her firm conviction that the man in the opposite box was a vampire.

"Excellency," said a servant, opening the door, "a man in the dress of a penitent wishes to speak to you."

"Ah, yes!" returned the count, "I know who he is, gentlemen. Will you return to the salon? You will find on the centre table some excellent Havana cigars. I will be with you directly."

The young men rose and returned into the salon, whilst the count, again apologizing, left by another door. Albert, who was a great smoker, and who had considered it no small sacrifice to be deprived of the cigars of the Café de Paris, approached the table, and uttered a cry of joy at perceiving some veritable *puros*.

"Well," asked Franz, "what think you of the Count of Monte-Cristo?"

"What do I think?" said Albert, evidently surprised at such a question from his companion. "I think that he is a delightful fellow, who does the honours of his table admirably; who has travelled much, read much;

is, like Brutus, of the Stoic school; and, moreover," added he, sending a volume of smoke up towards the ceiling, "that he has excellent cigars."

Such was Albert's opinion of the count, and as Franz well knew that Albert professed never to form an opinion except upon long reflection, he made no attempt to change it.

"But," said he, "did you remark one very singular thing?"

"What?"

"How attentively he looked at you."

"At me?"

"Yes."

Albert reflected.

"Ah," replied he, sighing, "that is not very surprising. I have been more than a year absent from Paris, and my clothes are of a most antiquated cut. The count takes me for a provincial. The first opportunity you have, undeceive him, I beg, and tell him I am nothing of the kind."

Franz smiled. An instant after, the count entered.

"I am now quite at your service, gentlemen," said he. "The carriage is going one way to the Place del Popolo, and we will go another; and, if you please, by the Rue du Cours. Take some more of these cigars, M. de Morcerf."

"With all my heart," returned Albert. "These Italian cigars are horrible. When you come to Paris, I will return all this."

"I will not refuse. I intend going there soon, and since you allow me, I will pay you a visit. Come, we have not any time to lose. It is half-past twelve; let us set off."

All three descended. The coachman received his master's orders, and drove down the Via del Babuino. Whilst the three gentlemen walked towards the Place d'Espagne and the Via Frattina, which led directly between the Fiano and Rospoli Palaces, all Franz's

attention was directed towards the windows of that last palace, for he had not forgotten the signal agreed upon between the man in the mantle and the Transtevere peasant.

"Which are your windows?" asked he of the count, with as much indifference as he could assume.

"The three last," returned he, with a negligence evidently unaffected, for he could not imagine with what intention the question was put.

Franz glanced rapidly towards the three windows. The side windows were hung with yellow damask, and the centre one with white damask and a red cross. The man in the mantle had kept his promise to the Transtevere, and there could now be no doubt that he was the count. The three windows were still untenanted. Preparations were making on every side—chairs were placed, scaffolds were raised, and windows were hung with flags. The masks could not appear; the carriages could not move about; but the masks were visible behind the windows, the carriages, and the doors.

Franz, Albert, and the count continued to descend the Rue du Cours. As they approached the Place del Popolo, the crowd became more dense, and above the heads of the multitude two objects were visible—the obelisk surmounted by a cross, which marks the centre of the place, and before the obelisk, at the point where the three streets, Del Babuino, Del Corso, and Di Ripetta meet, the two uprights of the scaffold, between which glittered the curved knife of the *mandaïa*. At the corner of the street they met the count's steward, who was awaiting his master.

The window—let at an exorbitant price, which the count had doubtless wished to conceal from his guests—was on the second floor of the great palace, situated between the Rue del Babuino and the Monte-Pincio. It consisted, as we have said, of a small dressing-room opening into a bedroom, and when the door of communication was shut, the inmates were quite alone. On

two chairs were laid as many elegant costumes of *paillasse* in blue and white satin.

"As you left the choice of your costumes to me," said the count to the two friends, "I have had these brought, as they will be the most worn this year; and they are most suitable on account of the *confetti* [sweetmeats], as they do not show the flour."

Franz heard the words of the count but imperfectly, and he perhaps did not fully appreciate this new attention to their wishes, for he was wholly absorbed by the spectacle that the Piazza del Popolo presented, and by the terrible instrument that was in the centre. Two men, seated on the movable plank on which the culprit is laid, were eating their breakfasts whilst waiting for the criminal. Their repast consisted apparently of bread and sausages. One of them lifted the plank, took thence a flask of wine, drank some, and then passed it to his companion. These two men were the executioner's assistants. At this sight Franz felt the perspiration start forth upon his brow. The prisoners, transported the previous evening from the Carcere Nuovo to the little church of Sainte Marie del Popolo, had passed the night, each accompanied by two priests, in a chapel closed by a grating, before which were two sentinels, relieved at intervals. Suddenly the doors of the church opened. A brotherhood of penitents, clothed from head to foot in robes of gray sackcloth, with holes for the eyes alone, and each holding in his hand a lighted taper, appeared first. The chief marched at the head. Behind the penitents came a man of vast stature and proportions. He was naked, with the exception of cloth drawers, at the left side of which hung a huge knife in a sheath, and he bore on his right shoulder a heavy mace. This man was the executioner. He had, moreover, sandals bound on his feet by cords. Behind the executioner came, in the order in which they were to die, first Peppino, and then Andrea. Each was accompanied by two priests. Neither had their eyes bandaged. Peppino walked with a firm

step, doubtless aware of what awaited him. Andrea was supported by two priests. Each of them kissed from time to time the crucifix a confessor held out to them. At this sight alone Franz felt his legs tremble under him. He looked at Albert; he was white as his shirt, and mechanically cast away his cigar, although he had not half smoked it. The count alone seemed unmoved—nay, more, a slight colour seemed striving to rise in his pale cheeks. His nostrils dilated like a wild beast that scents its prey, and his lips, half opened, disclosed his white teeth, small and sharp like those of a jackal. And yet his features wore an expression of smiling tenderness, such as Franz had never before witnessed in them; his black eyes especially were full of kindness and pity. However, the two culprits advanced, and as they approached their faces became visible. Peppino was a handsome young man of four- or five-and-twenty, bronzed by the sun. He carried his head erect, and seemed to look on which side his liberator would appear. Andrea was short and fat. His visage, marked with brutal cruelty, did not indicate age. He might be thirty. In prison he had suffered his beard to grow; his head fell on his shoulder, his legs bent beneath him, and he seemed to obey a mechanical movement of which he was unconscious.

"I thought," said Franz to the count, "that you told me there would be but one execution?"

"I told you true," replied he coldly.

"However, here are two culprits."

"Yes; but only one of these two is about to die. The other has long years to live."

"If the pardon is to come, there is no time to lose."

"And see, here it is," said the count.

At the moment when Peppino arrived at the foot of the *mandaïa*, a penitent, who seemed to arrive late, forced his way through the soldiers, and advancing to the chief of the brotherhood gave him a folded paper.

The piercing eye of Peppino had noticed all. The

chief took the paper, unfolded it, and raising his hand, "Heaven be praised, and his Holiness also!" said he in a loud voice. "Here is a pardon for one of the prisoners."

"A pardon!" cried the people with one voice. "A pardon!"

"A pardon for Peppino, called Rocca Priori," said the principal friar. And he passed the paper to the officer commanding the carbineers, who read and returned it to him.

Franz was fascinated by the horrible spectacle. The two assistants had borne Andrea to the scaffold; and there, spite of his struggles, his bites, and his cries, had forced him to his knees. During this time the executioner had raised his mace, and signed to them to get out of the way. The criminal strove to rise, but ere he had time the mace fell on his left temple. A dull and heavy sound was heard, and the man dropped on his face like an ox, and then turned over on his back. The executioner let fall his mace, drew his knife, and with one stroke opened his throat, and, mounting on his stomach, stamped violently on it with his feet. At every stroke a jet of blood sprang from the wound.

This time Franz could sustain himself no longer, but sank half fainting into a seat. Albert, with his eyes closed, was standing grasping the window curtains. The count was erect and triumphant, like the Avenging Angel.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CARNIVAL AT ROME.

When Franz recovered his senses he saw Albert drinking a glass of water, of which his paleness showed he stood in great need, and the count, who was assuming his costume of *paillasse*. He glanced mechanically towards

the place. All had disappeared—scaffold, executioners, victims—nought remained but the people, full of noise and excitement. The bell of Monte-Citorio, which only sounds on the pope's decease and the opening of the Carnival, was ringing a joyous peal.

"Well," asked he of the count, "what has, then, happened?"

"Nothing," replied the count; "only, as you see, the Carnival has commenced. Make haste and dress yourself."

"In reality," said Franz, "this horrible scene has passed away like a dream."

"It is but a dream—the nightmare—that has disturbed you."

"Yes, that I have suffered. But the culprit?"

"That is a dream also; only he has remained asleep, whilst you have awakened; and who knows which of you is the more fortunate?"

"But Peppino, what has become of him?"

"Peppino is a lad of sense, who, unlike most men, who are furious if they pass unnoticed, was delighted to see that the general attention was directed towards his companion. He profited by this distraction to slip away amongst the crowd, without even thanking the worthy priests who accompanied him. Decidedly man is an ungrateful and egotistical animal. But dress yourself. See, M. de Morcerf sets you the example."

Franz felt it would be ridiculous not to follow his two companions' example. He assumed his costume, and fastened on his mask, that scarcely equalled the pallor of his own face. Their toilet finished, they descended. The carriage awaited them at the door, filled with sweetmeats and bouquets. They fell into the line of carriages.

The strife had fairly commenced, and the recollection of what they had seen half an hour before was gradually effaced from the young men's minds, so much were they occupied by the gay and glittering procession they now beheld. As for the Count of Monte-Cristo, he had never

for an instant showed any appearance of having been moved.

At the second turn the count stopped the carriage, and requested permission to quit them, leaving the vehicle at their disposal. Franz looked up; they were opposite the Rospoli Palace. At the centre window, the one hung with white damask with a red cross, was a blue domino, beneath which Franz's imagination easily pictured the beautiful Greek of the Argentina.

"Gentlemen," said the count, springing out, "when you are tired of being actors, and wish to become spectators of this scene, you know you have places at my windows. In the meantime, dispose of my coachman, my carriage, and my servants."

Franz thanked the count for his attention. As for Albert, he was busily occupied throwing bouquets at a carriage full of Roman peasants that was passing near him. Unfortunately for him, the line of carriages moved on again, and whilst he descended the Place del Popolo, the other ascended towards the Palais de Venise.

"Ah! my dear fellow!" said he to Franz, "you did not see?"

"What?"

"There—that calèche filled with Roman peasants."

"No."

"Well, I am convinced they were all charming women."

"How unfortunate you were masked, Albert!" said Franz. "Here was an opportunity of making up for past disappointments."

"Oh!" replied he, half laughing, half serious; "I hope the Carnival will not pass without some amends in one shape or the other."

But, in spite of Albert's hope, the day passed unmarked by any incident, except meeting two or three times the calèche with the Roman peasants. At one of these encounters, accidentally or purposely, Albert's mask fell off. He instantly rose and cast the remainder of the bouquets into the carriage. Doubtless one of the charming

females Albert had divined beneath their coquettish disguise was touched by his gallantry, for in her turn, as the carriage of the two friends passed her, she threw a bunch of violets into it. Albert seized it, and as Franz had no reason to suppose it was addressed to him, he suffered Albert to retain it. Albert placed it in his button-hole, and the carriage went triumphantly on.

"Well," said Franz to him, "here is the commencement of an adventure."

"Laugh if you please. I really think so. So I will not abandon this bouquet."

The fair unknown had resolved, doubtless, to carry the intrigue no further; for although the young men made several more turns, they did not again see the calèche, which had turned up one of the neighbouring streets. Then they returned to the Rospoli Palace; but the count and the blue domino had also disappeared. The two windows, hung with yellow damask, were still occupied by the persons whom the count had invited. At this moment the same bell that had proclaimed the commencement of the mascherata sounded the retreat. The file on the Corso broke the line, and in a second all the carriages had disappeared. Franz and Albert were opposite the Via delle Maratte. The coachman, without saying a word, drove up it, passed along the Place d'Espagne and the Rospoli Palace, and stopped at the door of the hotel.

Maître Pastrini came to the door to receive his guests.

Franz's first care was to inquire after the count, and to express his regret he had not returned in sufficient time to take him up; but Pastrini reassured him by saying that the Count of Monte-Cristo had ordered a second carriage for himself, and that it had gone at four o'clock to fetch him from the Rospoli Palace. The count had, moreover, charged him to offer the two friends the key of his box at the Argentina. Franz questioned Albert as to his intentions; but Albert had great projects to

put into execution before going to the theatre; and instead of making any answer, he inquired if Maître Pastrini could procure him a tailor.

"A tailor!" said the host. "And what for?"

"To make us, between now and to-morrow, two costumes of Roman peasants," returned Albert.

The host shook his head. "To make you two costumes between now and to-morrow? I ask your excellencies' pardon, but this is a demand quite French. For the next week you will not find a single tailor who would consent to sew six buttons on a waistcoat if you paid him a crown apiece for each button."

"Then I must give up the idea?"

"No; we have them ready made. Leave all to me; and to-morrow, when you wake, you shall find a collection of costumes with which you will be satisfied."

"My dear Albert," said Franz, "leave all to our host. He has already proved himself full of resources. Let us dine quietly, and afterwards go and see 'L'Italienne à Alger.'"

"Agreed," returned Albert; "but recollect, Maître Pastrini, that both my friend and myself attach the greatest importance to having to-morrow the costumes we have asked for."

The host again assured them they might rely on him, and that their wishes should be attended to. Upon which Franz and Albert mounted to their apartments, and proceeded to disencumber themselves of their costumes. Albert, as he took off his dress, carefully preserved the bunch of violets; it was his sign of recognition for the morrow. The two friends sat down to table; but they could not refrain from remarking the difference between the table of the Count of Monte-Cristo and that of Maître Pastrini. Truth compelled Franz, spite of the dislike he seemed to have taken to the count, to confess that the advantage was not on Pastrini's side.

During dessert the servant inquired at what time they wished for the carriage. Albert and Franz looked at

each other, fearing really to abuse the count's kindness. The servant understood them.

"His excellency the Count of Monte-Cristo had," he said, "given positive orders that the carriage was to remain at their lordships' orders all the day, and they could, therefore, dispose of it without fear of indiscretion."

They resolved to profit by the count's courtesy, and ordered the horses to be harnessed, whilst they substituted an evening costume for that which they had on, and which was somewhat the worse for the numerous combats they had sustained. This precaution taken, they went to the theatre, and installed themselves in the count's box. During the first act the Countess G—— entered hers. Her first look was at the *loge* where she had seen the count the previous evening, so that she perceived Franz and Albert in the box of the very person concerning whom she had expressed so strange an opinion to Franz. Her opera-glass was so fixedly directed towards them that Franz saw it would be cruel not to satisfy her curiosity; and, availing himself of one of the privileges of the spectators of the Italian theatres, which consists in using their boxes as their drawing-rooms, the two friends quitted their box to pay their respects to the countess. Scarcely had they entered the *loge* than she motioned to Franz to assume the seat of honour. Albert, in his turn, sat behind.

"Well," said she, hardly giving Franz time to sit down, "it seems you have nothing better to do than to make the acquaintance of this new Lord Ruthven, and you are the best friends in the world."

"Without being so far advanced as that, Madame la Comtesse," returned Franz, "I cannot deny we have abused his good-nature all day."

"All day?"

"Yes. This morning we breakfasted with him, we rode in his carriage all day, and now we have taken possession of his box."

"You know him then?"

"Yes, and no."

"How so?"

"It is a long story."

"Relate it to me."

"It would frighten you too much."

"Another reason."

"At least wait until the story has a conclusion."

"Very well; I prefer complete histories. But tell me how you made his acquaintance. Did any one introduce you to him?"

"No; it was he who introduced himself to us."

"When?"

"Last night, after we left you."

"Through what medium?"

"The very present one of our landlord."

"He is staying, then, at the Hôtel de Londres with you?"

"Not only in the same hotel, but on the same floor."

"What is his name; for, of course, you know?"

"The Count of Monte-Cristo."

"That is not a family name."

"No; it is the name of the isle he has purchased."

"And he is a count?"

"A Tuscan count."

"Well, we must put up with that," said the countess, who was herself of one of the oldest families of Venice. "What sort of a man is he?"

"Ask the Vicomte de Morcerf."

"You hear, M. de Morcerf; I am referred to you," said the countess.

"We should be very hard to please, madame," returned Albert, "did we not think him delightful. A friend of ten years' standing could not have done more for us or with a more perfect courtesy."

"Come," observed the countess, smiling, "I see my vampire is only some millionaire, who has taken the appearance of Lara in order to avoid being confounded with M. de Rothschild. And have you seen her?"

"Her?"

"The beautiful Greek of yesterday."

"No. We heard, I think, the sound of her *guzla*, but she remained perfectly invisible."

"When you say invisible," interrupted Albert, "it is only to keep up the mystery. For whom do you take the blue domino at the window with the white curtains?"

"Where was this window with the white hangings?" said the countess.

"At the Rospoli Palace."

"The count had three windows of the Rospoli Palace?"

"Yes. Did you pass through the Rue du Cours?"

"Yes."

"Well, did you remark two windows hung with yellow damask, and one with white damask with a red cross? Those were the count's windows."

"Why, he must be a nabob. Do you know what those three windows were worth?"

"Two or three hundred Roman crowns?"

"Two or three thousand!"

"The devil!"

"Does his isle produce him such a revenue?"

"It does not bring him a bajocco."

"Then why did he purchase it?"

"For a whim."

"He is an original, then?"

"In reality," observed Albert, "he seemed to me somewhat eccentric. Were he at Paris, and a frequenter of the theatres, I should say he was a poor devil, literally mad. This morning he made two or three exits worthy of Didier or Anthony."

An hour afterwards the two friends returned to their hotel. Maître Pastrini had already set about procuring their disguises for the morrow, and he had assured them they would be perfectly satisfied. The next morning, at nine o'clock, he entered Franz's room, followed by a tailor, who had eight or ten costumes of Roman peasants on his arm. They selected two exactly alike, and charged

the tailor to sew on each of their hats about twenty yards of ribbon, and to procure them two of those long silken sashes of different colours with which the lower orders decorate themselves on fête-days. Albert was impatient to see how he looked in his new dress. It was a jacket and breeches of blue velvet, silk stockings with clocks, shoes with buckles, and a silk waistcoat. This picturesque attire set him off to great advantage; and when he had bound the scarf around his waist, and when his hat, placed coquettishly on one side, let fall on his shoulder a stream of ribbons, Franz was forced to confess that costume has much to do with the physical superiority we accord to certain nations. Franz complimented Albert, who looked at himself in the glass with an unequivocal smile of satisfaction. They were thus engaged when the Count of Monte-Cristo entered.

"Gentlemen," said he, "although a companion is agreeable, perfect freedom is sometimes still more agreeable. I come to say that to-day, and the remainder of the Carnival, I leave the carriage entirely at your disposal. The host will tell you I have three or four more, so that you do not deprive me in any way of it. Employ it, I pray you, for your pleasure or your business."

The young men wished to decline, but they could find no good reason for refusing an offer which was so agreeable to them. At half-past one they descended. The coachman and footman had put on their livery over their disguises, which gave them a more ridiculous appearance than ever, and which gained them the applause of Franz and Albert. Albert had fastened the faded bunch of violets to his button-hole. At the first sound of the bell they hastened into the Rue du Cours by the Via Vittoria.

At the second turn, a bunch of fresh violets, thrown from a carriage filled with *paillassines*, indicated to Albert that, like himself and his friend, the peasants had changed their costume also; and whether it was the result of chance, or whether a similar feeling had possessed them

both, whilst he had changed his costume they had assumed his.

Albert placed the fresh bouquet in his button-hole, but he kept the faded one in his hand; and when he again met the calèche, he raised it to his lips, an action which seemed greatly to amuse not only the fair lady who had thrown it but her joyous companions also. The day was as gay as the preceding one, perhaps even more animated and noisy. The count appeared for an instant at his window, but when they again repassed he had disappeared. It is almost needless to say that the flirtation between Albert and the fair peasant continued all day.

At ten minutes past five Albert entered overjoyed. The *paillassine* had resumed her peasant's costume, and as she passed had raised her mask. She was charming. Franz congratulated Albert, who received his congratulations with the air of a man conscious they were merited. He had recognized by certain unmistakable signs that his fair *incognita* belonged to the aristocracy. He had made up his mind to write to her the next day.

Franz remarked, whilst he gave these details, that Albert seemed to have something to ask of him, but that he was unwilling to ask it. He insisted upon it, declaring beforehand that he was willing to make any sacrifice he required. Albert let himself be pressed just as long as friendship required, and then avowed to Franz that he would do him a great favour by suffering him to occupy the carriage alone that day.

Albert attributed to Franz's absence the extreme kindness of the fair peasant in raising her mask.

The next morning he saw Albert pass and repass. He held an enormous bouquet, which he doubtless meant to make the bearer of his amorous epistle. This belief was changed into certainty when Franz saw the bouquet (remarkable by a circle of white camelias) in the hand of a charming *paillassine* dressed in rose-coloured satin.

The evening was no longer joy but delirium. Albert

nothing doubted but that the fair unknown would reply in the same manner. Franz anticipated his wishes by telling him the noise fatigued him, and that he would pass the next day in writing and looking over his journal.

Albert was not deceived; for the next evening Franz saw him enter, shaking triumphantly a folded paper he held by one corner.

"Well," said he, "was I mistaken?"

"She has answered you!" cried Franz.

"Read!"

This word was pronounced in a manner impossible to describe. Franz took the letter and read:—

"Tuesday evening, at seven o'clock, descend from your carriage opposite the Via dei Pontefici, and follow the Roman peasant who snatches your *moccoletto* from you. When you arrive at the first step of the church of San Giacomo, be sure to fasten a knot of rose-coloured ribbons to the shoulder of your costume of *paillasse*, in order that you may be recognized. Until then you will not see me. Constancy and Discretion."

"Well," asked he, when Franz had finished, "what do you think of that?"

"I think that the adventure is assuming a very agreeable appearance."

"I think so, also," replied Albert; "and I very much fear you will go alone to the Duke of Bracciano's ball."

Franz and Albert had received that morning an invitation from the celebrated Roman banker.

"Take care, Albert," said Franz. "All the nobility of Rome will be present, and if your fair *incognita* belong to the higher class of society she must go there."

"Whether she goes there or not, my opinion is still the same," returned Albert. "You have read the letter?"

"Yes."

"You know how imperfectly the women of the *mezzo cito* are educated in Italy?"

(This is the name of the lower class.)

"Yes."

"Well, read the letter again. Look at the writing, and find a fault in the language or orthography."

"You are born to good fortune," said Franz, as he returned the letter.

"Laugh as much as you will," replied Albert; "I am in love."

After dinner, the Count of Monte-Cristo was announced. They had not seen him for two days. Maître Pastrini informed them that business had called him to Civita Vecchia. He had started the previous evening, and had only returned an hour since.

The count had learned the two friends had sent to secure a box at the Argentina Theatre, and were told they were all let. In consequence, he brought them the key of his own—at least such was the apparent motive of his visit.

Franz and Albert made some difficulty, alleging their fear of depriving him of it; but the count replied that, as he was going to the Pali Theatre, the box at the Argentina Theatre would be lost if they did not profit by it. This assurance determined the two friends to accept it.

The evening passed as evenings mostly pass at Italian theatres—that is, not in listening to the music, but in paying visits and conversing. The Countess G—— wished to revive the subject of the count, but Franz announced he had something far newer to tell her; and, in spite of Albert's demonstrations of false modesty, he informed the countess of the great event which had preoccupied them for the three last days.

As similar intrigues are not uncommon in Italy, if we may credit travellers, the countess did not manifest the least incredulity, but congratulated Albert on his success. They promised, upon separating, to meet at the Duke of Bracciano's ball, to which all Rome was invited. The

heroine of the bouquet kept her word; she gave Albert no sign of her existence the morrow and the day after.

At length arrived the Tuesday, the last and most tumultuous day of the Carnival. The Tuesday the theatres open at ten o'clock in the morning, as Lent begins after eight at night; the Tuesday all those who through want of money, time, or enthusiasm, have not been to see the Carnival before, mingle in the gaiety and contribute to the noise and excitement. From two o'clock till five Franz and Albert followed in the fête, exchanging handfuls of confetti with the other carriages and the pedestrians, who crowded amongst the horses' feet and the carriage-wheels without a single accident, a single dispute, or a single fight.

Albert was triumphant in his costume of *paillasse*. A knot of rose-coloured ribbons fell from his shoulder almost to the ground. In order that there might be no confusion, Franz wore his peasant's costume.

As the day advanced the tumult became greater. There was not on the pavement, in the carriages, at the windows, a single tongue that was silent, a single arm that did not move. It was a human storm composed of a thunder of cries, and a hail of sweetmeats, flowers, eggs, oranges, and nosegays. At three o'clock the sound of fireworks, let off on the Place del Popolo and the Palais de Vénise (heard with difficulty amid the din and confusion), announced that the races were about to begin. The races, like the *moccoli*, are one of the episodes peculiar to the last days of the Carnival. At the sound of the fireworks the carriages instantly broke the ranks and retired by the adjacent streets. All these evolutions are executed with an inconceivable address and marvellous rapidity, without the police interfering in the matter.

The pedestrians ranged themselves against the walls; then the trampling of horses and the clashing of steel were heard. A detachment of carbineers, fifteen abreast, galloped up the Rue du Cours in order to clear it for the

barberi. When the detachment arrived at the Palais de Vénise, a second volley of fireworks was again discharged to announce that the street was clear. Almost instantly, in the midst of a tremendous and general outcry, seven or eight horses, excited by the shouts of three hundred thousand spectators, passed by like lightning. Then the Castle of Saint-Angelo fired three cannons to indicate that number three had won. Immediately, without any other signal, the carriages moved on, flowing on towards the Corso, down all the streets, like torrents pent up for a while, which again flow into the parent river; and the immense stream again continued its course between its two banks of granite.

The night was rapidly approaching; and already, at the cry of "*moccoletto!*" repeated by the shrill voices of a thousand vendors, two or three stars began to burn among the crowd. It was a signal. At the end of ten minutes fifty thousand lights glittered, descending from the Palais de Vénise to the Place del Popolo, and mounting from the Place del Popolo to the Palais de Vénise. It seemed the fête of Jack-o'-lanterns. It is impossible to form any idea of it without having seen it. Suppose all the stars had descended from the sky and mingled in a wild dance on the face of the earth; the whole accompanied by cries that were never heard in any other part of the world. The *facchino* follows the prince, the Transtevere the citizen, every one blowing, extinguishing, relighting. Had old Æolus appeared at this moment he would have been proclaimed king of the *moccoli*, and Aquilo the heir-presumptive to the throne.

This flaming race continued for two hours. The Rue du Cours was light as day; the features of the spectators on the third and fourth stories were visible. Every five minutes Albert took out his watch; at length it pointed to seven. The two friends were in the Via dei Pontefici. Albert sprang out, bearing his *moccoletto* in his hand. Two or three masks strove to knock his *moccoletto* out of his hand; but Albert, a first-rate pugi-

list, sent them rolling in the street, one after the other, and continued his course towards the church of San Giacomo. The steps were crowded with masks, who strove to snatch each other's flambeau. Franz followed Albert with his eyes, and saw him mount the first step. Instantly a mask, wearing the well-known costume of a female peasant, snatched his *moccoletto* from him without his offering any resistance. Franz was too far off to hear what they said, but, without doubt, nothing hostile passed, for he saw Albert disappear arm-in-arm with the peasant girl.

He watched them pass through the crowd some time, but at length he lost sight of them in the Via Macello. Suddenly the bell that gives the signal for the end of the Carnival sounded, and at the same instant all the *moccoletti* were extinguished as if by enchantment. It seemed as though one immense blast of the wind had extinguished every one. Franz found himself in utter darkness. No sound was audible save that of the carriages that conveyed the masks home; nothing was visible save a few lights that burned behind the windows.

The Carnival was finished.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CATACOMBS OF SAINT SEBASTIAN.

In his whole life, perhaps, Franz had never before experienced so sudden an impression, so rapid a transition from gaiety to sadness, as in this moment. It seemed as though Rome, under the magic breath of some demon of the night, had suddenly changed into a vast tomb. By a chance, which added yet more to the intensity of the darkness, the moon, which was on the wane, did not rise until eleven o'clock, and the streets which the young man traversed were plunged in the deepest

obscurity. The distance was short; and at the end of ten minutes his carriage, or rather the count's, stopped before the Hôtel de Londres.

Dinner was waiting; but as Albert had told him that he should not return so soon, Franz sat down without him.

Maître Pastrini, who had been accustomed to see them dine together, inquired into the cause of his absence, but Franz merely replied that Albert had received on the previous evening an invitation which he had accepted. The sudden extinction of the *moccoletti*, the darkness which had replaced the light, the silence which had succeeded, and the turmoil, had left in Franz's mind a certain depression which was not free from uneasiness. He therefore dined very silently, in spite of the officious attention of his host, who presented himself two or three times to inquire if he wanted anything.

Franz resolved to wait for Albert as late as possible. He ordered the carriage, therefore, for eleven o'clock, desiring Maître Pastrini to inform him the moment Albert returned to the hotel. At eleven o'clock Albert had not come back. Franz dressed himself and went out, telling his host that he was going to pass the night at the Duke of Bracciano's. The house of the Duke of Bracciano is one of the most delightful in Rome; his lady, one of the last heiresses of the Colonnas, does its honours with the most consummate grace, and thus their fêtes have a European celebrity. Franz and Albert had brought to Rome letters of introduction to them; and the first question on Franz's arrival was to ask him where was his travelling companion. Franz replied that he had left him at the moment they were about to extinguish the *moccoli*, and that he had lost sight of him in the Via Macello.

"Then he has not returned?" said the duke.

"I waited for him until this hour," replied Franz.

"And do you know whither he went?"

"No, not precisely; however, I think it was something very like an assignation."

"Diavolo!" said the duke, "this is a bad day, or rather a bad night, to be out late; is it not, countess?"

These words were addressed to the Countess G——, who had just arrived, and was leaning on the arm of M. Torlonia, the duke's brother.

"I think, on the contrary, that it is a charming night," replied the countess, "and those who are here will complain but of one thing—that of its too rapid flight."

"I am not speaking," said the duke, with a smile, "of the persons who are here. The men run no other danger than that of falling in love with you, and the women of falling ill of jealousy at seeing you so lovely. I alluded to persons who were out in the streets of Rome."

"Ah!" asked the countess, "who is out in the streets of Rome at this hour, unless it be to go to a ball?"

"Our friend, Albert de Morcerf, countess, whom I left in pursuit of his unknown about seven o'clock this evening," said Franz, "and whom I have not since seen."

"And don't you know where he is?"

"Not at all."

"Is he armed?"

"He is *en paillasse*."

"You should not have allowed him to go," said the duke to Franz; "you who know Rome better than he does."

"You might as well have tried to stop number three of the *barberi*, who gained the prize in the race to-day," replied Franz; "and then, moreover, what could happen to him?"

"Who can tell? The night is gloomy, and the Tiber is very near the Via Macello."

Franz felt a shudder run through his veins at observing the feeling of the duke and the countess so much in unison with his own personal disquietude.

"I informed them at the hotel that I had the honour of passing the night here, duke," said Franz; "and desired them to come and inform me of his return."

"Ah!" replied the duke, "here, I think, is one of my servants who is seeking you."

The duke was not mistaken. When he saw Franz, the servant came up to him.

"Your excellency," he said, "the master of the Hôtel de Londres has sent to let you know that a man is waiting for you with a letter from the Viscount de Morcerf."

"A letter from the viscount!" exclaimed Franz.

"Yes."

"And who is the man?"

"I do not know."

"Why did he not bring it to me here?"

"The messenger did not say."

"And where is the messenger?"

"He went away directly he saw me enter the ball-room to find you."

"Oh!" said the countess to Franz; "go with all speed. Poor young man! Perhaps some accident has happened to him."

"I will hasten," replied Franz.

"Shall we see you again to give us any information?" inquired the countess.

"Yes, if it is not any serious affair; otherwise I cannot answer as to what I may do myself."

"Be prudent, in any event," said the countess.

"Oh, pray be assured of that."

Franz took his hat and went away in haste. He had sent away his carriage with orders for it to fetch him at two o'clock. Fortunately the Palazzo Bracciano, which is on one side in the Rue du Cours and on the other in the Place des Saints Apôtres, is hardly ten minutes' walk from the Hôtel de Londres. As he came near the hotel, Franz saw a man in the centre of the street; he had no doubt that it was the messenger from Albert. The man was wrapped up in a large cloak. He went up to him, but, to his extreme astonishment, this individual first addressed him.

"What wants your excellency of me?" inquired the man, retreating a step or two as if to keep on his guard.

"Are not you the person who brought me a letter," inquired Franz, "from the Viscount de Morcerf?"

"Your excellency lodges at Pastrini's hotel?"

"I do."

"Your excellency is the travelling companion of the viscount?"

"I am."

"Your excellency's name——"

"Is the Baron Franz d'Epinay."

"Then it is to your excellency that this letter is addressed."

"Is there any answer?" inquired Franz, taking the letter from him.

"Yes; your friend, at least, hopes so."

"Come upstairs with me, and I will give it to you."

"I prefer waiting here," said the messenger, with a smile.

"And why?"

"Your excellency will know when you have read the letter."

"Shall I find you, then, here?"

"Certainly."

Franz entered the hotel. On the staircase he met Maître Pastrini.

"Well?" said the landlord.

"Well—what?" responded Franz.

"You have seen the man who desired to speak with you from your friend?" he asked of Franz.

"Yes, I have seen him," he replied, "and he has handed this letter to me. Light the candle in my apartment, if you please."

The innkeeper gave orders to a servant to go before Franz with a bougie. The young man had found Maître Pastrini looking very much alarmed, and this had only made him the more anxious to read Albert's letter, and thus he went instantly towards the waxlight and un-

folded the letter. It was written and signed by Albert. Franz read it twice before he could comprehend what it contained. It was thus conceived :—

"My dear Fellow,—The moment you have received this, have the kindness to take from my pocket-book, which you will find in the square drawer of the secrétaire, the letter of credit ; add your own to it if it be not sufficient. Run to Torlonia, draw from him instantly four thousand piastres, and give them to the bearer. It is urgent that I should have this money without delay.

"I do not say more, relying on you as you may rely on me,—Your friend, Albert de Morcerf.

"P.S. I now believe in Italian banditti."

Below these lines were written, in a strange hand, the following in Italian : —

"Se alle sei della mattina le quattro mile piastre non sono nelle mie mani, alle sette il Conte Alberto avrà cessato di vivere. Luigi Vampa."

"*If by six in the morning the four thousand piastres are not in my hands, by seven o'clock the Viscount Albert de Morcerf will have ceased to live.*"

This second signature explained all to Franz, who now understood the objection of the messenger to coming up into the apartment ; the street was safer for him. Albert, then, had fallen into the hands of the famous chief of banditti in whose existence he had for so long time refused to believe.

There was no time to lose. He hastened to open the secrétaire, and found the pocket-book in the drawer, and in it the letter of credit ; there was in all six thousand piastres, but of these six thousand Albert had already expended three thousand. As to Franz, he had no letter of credit, as he lived at Florence, and had only come to Rome to pass seven or eight days ; he had

brought but a hundred louis, and of these he had not more than fifty left.

Thus seven or eight hundred piastres were wanting to them both to make up the sum that Albert required. True, he might in such a case rely on the kindness of M. Torlonia.

He was, therefore, about to return to the Palazzo Bracciano without loss of time when suddenly a luminous idea crossed his mind. He remembered the Count of Monte-Cristo. Franz was about to ring for Maître Pastrini when that worthy presented himself.

"My dear sir," he said hastily, "do you know if the count is within?"

"Yes, your excellency; he has but this moment returned."

"Is he in bed?"

"I should say no."

"Then ring at his door, if you please, and request him to be so kind as to give me an audience."

Maître Pastrini did as he was desired, and returning five minutes after, he said,—

"The count awaits your excellency."

Franz went along the corridor, and a servant introduced him to the count. He was in a small cabinet which Franz had not yet seen, and which was surrounded with divans. The count came towards him.

"Well, what good wind blows you hither at this hour?" said he. "Have you come to sup with me? It would be very kind of you."

"No; I have come to speak to you of a very serious matter."

"A serious matter!" said the count, looking at Franz with the earnestness usual to him; "and what may it be?"

"Are we alone?"

"Yes," replied the count, going to the door and returning. Franz gave him Albert's letter.

"Read that," he said.

The count read it.

"Ah, ah!" said he.

"Did you see the postscript?"

"I did indeed."

"'Se alle sei della mattina le quattro mile piastre non sono nelle mie mani, alle sette il Conte Alberto avrà cessato di vivere. Luigi Vampa.'"

"What think you of that?" inquired Franz.

"Have you the money he demands?"

"Yes, all but eight hundred piastres."

The count went to his secrétaire, opened it, and pulling out a drawer filled with gold, said to Franz,—

"I hope you will not offend me by applying to any one but myself."

"You see, on the contrary, I come to you first and instantly," replied Franz.

"And I thank you. Have what you will," and he made a sign to Franz to take what he pleased.

"Is it absolutely necessary, then, to send the money to Luigi Vampa?" asked the young man, looking fixedly in his turn at the count.

"Judge yourself," replied he. "The postscript is explicit."

"I think that if you would take the trouble of reflecting, you could find a way of simplifying the negotiation," said Franz.

"How so?" returned the count, with surprise.

"If we were to go together to Luigi Vampa, I am sure he would not refuse you Albert's freedom."

"What influence can I possibly have over a bandit?"

"Have you not just rendered him one of those services that are never forgotten?"

"What is that?"

"Have you not saved Peppino's life?"

"Ah, ah!" said the count, "who told you that?"

"No matter; I know it."

The count knit his brows, and remained silent an instant.

"And if I went to Vampa, would you accompany me?"

"If my society would not be disagreeable."

"Be it so. It is a lovely night, and a walk outside Rome will do us both good."

"Shall I take any arms?"

"For what purpose?"

"Any money?"

"It is useless. Where is the man who brought the letter?"

"In the street."

"He awaits the answer?"

"Yes."

"I must learn where we are going. I will summon him hither."

"It is useless; he would not come up."

"To your apartments, perhaps; but he will not make any difficulty in entering mine."

The count went to the window of the apartment that looked on to the street, and whistled in a peculiar manner. The man in the mantle quitted the wall, and advanced into the centre of the street.

"*Salite!*" said the count, in the same tone in which he would have given an order to his servant. The messenger obeyed without the least hesitation, but rather with alacrity, and mounting the steps of the passage at a bound entered the hotel. Five seconds afterwards he was at the door of the cabinet.

"Ah, it is you, Peppino," said the count.

But Peppino, instead of answering, threw himself on his knees, seized the count's hand, and covered it with kisses.

"Ah!" said the count, "you have, then, not forgotten that I saved your life; that is strange, for it is a week ago."

"No, excellency, and I never shall forget it," returned Peppino, with an accent of profound gratitude.

"Never!—that is a long time; but it is something that you believe so. Rise and answer."

Peppino glanced anxiously at Franz.

"Oh, you may speak before his excellency," said he. "He is one of my friends.—You allow me to give you this title?" continued the count in French; "it is necessary to excite this man's confidence."

"You can speak before me," said Franz. "I am a friend of the count's."

"Good," returned Peppino. "I am ready to answer any questions your excellency may address to me."

"How did the Viscount Albert fall into Luigi's hands?"

"Excellency, the Frenchman's carriage passed several times the one in which was Teresa."

"The chief's mistress?"

"Yes; the Frenchman threw her a bouquet, Teresa returned it—all this with the consent of the chief, who was in the carriage."

"What!" cried Franz, "was Luigi Vampa in the carriage with the Roman peasants?"

"It was he who drove, disguised as a coachman," replied Peppino.

"Well?" said the count.

"Well, then the Frenchman took off his mask. Teresa, with the chief's consent, did the same. The Frenchman asked for a rendezvous. Teresa gave him one; only instead of Teresa it was Beppo who was on the steps of the church of San Giacomo."

"What!" exclaimed Franz, "the peasant girl who snatched his *moccoletto* from him——"

"Was a lad of fifteen," replied Peppino; "but it was no disgrace to your friend to have been deceived. Beppo has taken in plenty of others."

"And Beppo led him outside the walls?" said the count.

"Exactly so; a carriage was waiting at the end of Via Macello. Beppo got in, inviting the Frenchman to follow him, and he did not wait to be asked twice. He

gallantly offered the right-hand seat to Beppo, and sat by him. Beppo told him he was going to take him to a villa a league from Rome; the Frenchman assured him he would follow him to the end of the world. The coachman went up the Rue di Ripetta and the Porte San Paolo; and when they were two hundred yards outside, as the Frenchman became somewhat too forward, Beppo put a brace of pistols to his head; the coachman pulled up and did the same. At the same time four of the band, who were concealed on the banks of the Almo, surrounded the carriage. The Frenchman made some resistance, and nearly strangled Beppo; but he could not resist five armed men, and was forced to yield. They made him get out, walk along the banks of the river, and then brought him to Teresa and Luigi, who were waiting for him in the catacombs of Saint Sebastian."

"Well," said the count, turning towards Franz, "it seems to me that this is a very likely story. What do you say to it?"

"Why, that I should think it very amusing," replied Franz, "if it had happened to any one but poor Albert."

"And, in truth, if you had not found me here," said the count, "it might have proved a gallant adventure which would have cost your friend dear; but now be assured, his alarm will be the only serious consequence."

"And shall we go and find him?" inquired Franz.

"Oh, decidedly, sir; he is in a very picturesque place. Do you know the catacombs of San Sebastian?"

"I was never in them, but I have often resolved to visit them."

"Well, here is an opportunity made to your hand, and it would be difficult to contrive a better. Have you a carriage?"

"No."

"That is of no consequence; I have always one ready, day and night."

"Always ready?"

"Yes; I am a very capricious being, and I should

tell you that sometimes when I rise, or after my dinner, or in the middle of the night, I resolve on starting for some particular point, and away I go."

The count rang, and a footman appeared.

"Order out the carriage," he said, "and remove the pistols which are in the holsters. You need not awaken the coachman. Ali will drive."

In a very short time the noise of wheels was heard, and the carriage stopped at the door. The count took out his watch.

"Half-past twelve," he said. "We might start at five o'clock and be in time, but the delay may cause your friend to pass an uneasy night; and, therefore, we had better go with all speed to extricate him from the hands of the infidels. Are you still resolved to accompany me?"

"More determined than ever."

"Well, then, come along."

Franz and the count went downstairs accompanied by Peppino. At the door they found the carriage. Ali was on the box, and Franz recognized him as the dumb slave of the grotto of Monte-Cristo. Franz and the count got into the carriage. Peppino placed himself beside Ali, and they set off at a rapid pace.

A short time before they reached the Circus of Caracalla the carriage stopped; Peppino opened the door, and the count and Franz alighted.

"In ten minutes," said the count to his companion, "we shall arrive there."

He then took Peppino aside, gave him some order in a low voice, and Peppino went away, taking with him a torch brought with them in the carriage. Five minutes elapsed, during which Franz saw the shepherd advance along a narrow path in the midst of the irregular ground which forms the convulsed soil of the plain of Rome, and disappear in the midst of the high red herbage, which seemed like the bristling mane of some enormous lion.

"Now," said the count, "let us follow him."

Franz and the count in their turn then advanced along the same path, which, at the end of a hundred paces, led them by a declivity to the bottom of a small valley. They then perceived two men conversing in the shade.

"Ought we to advance?" asked Franz of the count, "or should we pause?"

"Let us go on; Peppino will have warned the sentry of our coming."

One of these two men was Peppino, and the other a bandit on the lookout. Franz and the count advanced, and the bandit saluted them.

"Your excellecny," said Peppino, addressing the count, "if you will follow me, the opening of the catacombs is close at hand."

"Go on, then," replied the count.

They came to an opening behind a clump of bushes and in the midst of a pile of rocks by which a man could scarcely pass. Peppino glided first into this crevice, but after advancing a few paces the passage widened. Then he paused, lighted his torch, and turned round to see if they came after him. The count first reached a kind of square space, and Franz followed him closely. The earth sloped in a gentle descent, enlarging as they proceeded; still, Franz and the count were compelled to advance stooping, and scarcely able to proceed two abreast. They went on a hundred and fifty paces thus, and then were stopped by "Who goes there?"

At the same time they saw the reflection of a torch on the barrel of a carbine.

"A friend!" responded Peppino; and, advancing alone towards the sentry, he said a few words to him in a low tone, and then he, like the first, saluted the nocturnal visitors, making a sign that they might proceed.

Behind the sentinel was a staircase with twenty steps. Franz and the count descended these, and found themselves in a kind of cross-roads, forming a burial-ground

Five roads diverged like the rays of a star, and the walls, dug into niches, placed one above the other in the shape of coffins, showed that they were at last in the catacombs. In one of the cavities, whose extent it was impossible to determine, some rays of light were visible. The count laid his hand on Franz's shoulder,—

"Would you like to see a camp of bandits?" he inquired.

"Exceedingly," replied Franz.

"Come with me, then.—Peppino, extinguish the torch."

Peppino obeyed, and Franz and the count were suddenly in utter darkness; only fifty paces in advance of them there played along the wall some reddish beams of light, more visible since Peppino had put out his torch. They advanced silently, the count guiding Franz as if he had the singular faculty of seeing in the dark.

"Who goes there?" cried the sentinel, less occupied, and who saw by the lamplight a shadow which approached his chief.

At this sound Vampa rose quickly, drawing at the same moment a pistol from his girdle. In a moment all the bandits were on their feet, and twenty carbines were levelled at the count.

"Well," said he, in a voice perfectly calm, and no muscle of his countenance disturbed—"well, my dear Vampa, it appears to me that you receive a friend with a great deal of ceremony!"

"Ground arms!" exclaimed the chief, with an imperative sign of the hand, whilst with the other he took off his hat respectfully; then, turning to the singular personage who had caused this scene, he said, "Your pardon, M. le Comte, but I was so far from expecting the honour of a visit, that I did not really recognize you."

"It seems that your memory is equally short in everything, Vampa," said the count; "and that not only do you forget people's faces, but also the conditions you make with them."

"What conditions have I forgotten, M. le Comte?" inquired the bandit, with the air of a man who, having committed an error, is anxious to repair it.

"Was it not agreed," asked the count, "that not only my person, but also that of my friends, should be respected by you?"

"And how have I broken that treaty, your excellency?"

"You have this evening carried off and conveyed hither the Viscount Albert de Morcerf. Well," continued the count, in a tone that made Franz shudder, "this young gentleman is one of *my friends;* this young gentleman lodges in the same hotel as myself; this young gentleman has been up and down the Corsa for eight hours in my private carriage, and yet I repeat to you you have carried him off, and conveyed him hither, and," added the count, taking the letter from his pocket, "you have set a ransom on him as if he were the first comer."

"Why did you not tell me all this, you?" inquired the brigand chief, turning towards his men, who all retreated before his look. "Why have you exposed me thus to fail in my word towards a gentleman like the count, who has all our lives in his hands? By heavens! if I thought one of you knew that the young gentleman was the friend of his excellency, I would blow his brains out with my own hand!"

"Well," said the count, turning towards Franz, "I told you there was some mistake in this."

"Are you not alone?" asked Vampa with uneasiness.

"I am with the person to whom this letter was addressed, and to whom I desired to prove that Luigi Vampa was a man of his word.—Come, your excellency, here is Luigi Vampa, who will himself express to you his deep regret at the mistake he has committed."

Franz approached, the chief advancing several steps to meet him.

"Welcome amongst us, your excellency," he said to him. "You heard what the count just said, and also my reply; let me add that I would not for the four thousand piastres at which I had fixed your friend's ransom that this had happened."

"But," said Franz, looking around him uneasily, "where is the viscount? I do not see him."

"Nothing has happened to him, I hope?" said the count, frowningly.

"The prisoner is there," replied Vampa, pointing to the hollow place in front of which the bandit was on guard, "and I will go myself and tell him he is free."

The chief went towards the place he had pointed out as Albert's prison, and Franz and the count followed him.

"What is the prisoner doing?" inquired Vampa of the sentinel.

"*Ma foi!* captain," replied the sentry, "I do not know; for the last hour I have not heard him stir."

"Come in, your excellency," said Vampa.

The count and Franz ascended seven or eight steps after the chief, who drew back a bolt, and opened a door. Then by the gleam of a lamp, similar to that which lighted the Columbarium, Albert was to be seen wrapped up in a cloak which one of the bandits had lent him, lying in a corner in profound slumber.

"Come!" said the count, smiling with his own peculiar smile, "not so bad for a man who is to be shot at seven o'clock to-morrow morning!"

Vampa looked at Albert with a kind of admiration. He was not insensible to such a proof of courage.

"You are right, M. le Comte," he said; "this must be one of your friends."

Then, going to Albert, he touched him on the shoulder, saying,—

"Will your excellency please to awaken?"

Albert stretched out his arms, rubbed his eyelids, and opened his eyes.

"Ah, ah!" said he, "is it you, captain? You should have allowed me to have slept. I had such a delightful dream. I was dancing the galop at Torlonia's with the Countess G——."

Then he drew from his pocket his watch, which he had preserved that he might see how time sped.

"Half-past one only," said he. "Why the devil do you rouse me at this hour?"

"To tell you that you are free, your excellency."

"My dear fellow," replied Albert, with perfect ease of mind, "remember for the future Napoleon's maxim, 'Never awaken me but for bad news.' If you had let me sleep on, I should have finished my galop, and have been grateful to you all my life. So, then, they have paid my ransom?"

"No, your excellency."

"Well, then, how am I free?"

"A person to whom I can refuse nothing has come to demand you."

"Come hither?"

"Yes, hither."

"Really! Then that person is a most amiable person."

Albert looked round, and perceived Franz.

"What!" said he, "is it you, my dear Franz, whose devotion and friendship are thus displayed?"

"No, not I," replied Franz, "but our neighbour, the Count of Monte-Cristo."

"Ah, ah, M. le Comte!" said Albert gaily, and arranging his cravat and wristbands, "you are really most kind, and I hope you will consider me as your eternally obliged, in the first place for the carriage, and in the next for this!" and he put out his hand to the count, who shuddered as he gave his own, but who nevertheless did give it.

The bandit gazed on this scene with amazement. He was evidently accustomed to see his prisoners tremble before him, and yet here was one whose gay temperament was not for a moment altered; as for

Franz, he was enchanted at the way in which Albert had sustained the national honour in the presence of the bandit.

"My dear Albert," he said, "if you will make haste, we shall yet have time to finish the night at Torlonia's. You may conclude your interrupted galop, so that you will owe no ill-will to Signor Luigi, who has, indeed, throughout this whole affair acted like a gentleman."

"You are decidedly right; and we may reach the Palazzo at two o'clock.—Signor Luigi," continued Albert, "is there any formality to fulfil before I take leave of your excellency?"

"None, sir," replied the bandit; "you are as free as air."

"Well, then, a happy and merry life to you.—Come, gentlemen, come!"

And Albert, followed by Franz and the count, descended the staircase, crossed the square chamber, where stood all the bandits, hat in hand.

"Peppino," said the brigand chief, "give me the torch."

"What are you going to do, then?" inquired the count.

"I will show you the way back myself," said the captain; "that is the least honour I can render to your excellency."

And taking the lighted torch from the hand of the herdsman, he preceded his guests, not as a servant, who performs an act of servility, but like a king who precedes ambassadors. On reaching the door he bowed.

"And now, M. le Comte," added he, "allow me to repeat my apologies, and I hope you will not entertain any resentment at what has occurred."

"No, my dear Vampa," replied the count. "Besides, you compensate for your mistakes in so gentlemanly a way that one almost feels obliged to you for having committed them."

"Gentlemen," added the chief, turning towards the young men, "perhaps the offer may not appear very

tempting to you, but if you should ever feel inclined to pay me a second visit, wherever I may be, you shall be welcome."

Franz and Albert bowed.

The count went out first, then Albert; Franz paused for a moment.

"Has your excellency anything to ask me?" said Vampa, with a smile.

"Yes, I have," replied Franz. "I am curious to know what work you were perusing with so much attention as we entered."

"Cæsar's 'Commentaries,'" said the bandit; "it is my favourite work."

"Well, are you coming?" asked Albert.

"Yes," replied Franz, "here I am," and he, in his turn, left the caves.

They advanced to the plain.

"Ah, your pardon!" said Albert, turning round; "will you allow me, captain?"

And he lighted his cigar at Vampa's torch.

"Now, M. le Comte," he said, "let us on with all the speed we may. I am enormously anxious to finish my night at the Duke of Bracciano's."

They found the carriage where they had left it. The count said a word in Arabic to Ali, and the horses went off at great speed.

It was just two o'clock by Albert's watch when the two friends entered into the dancing-room.

Their return was quite an event; but as they entered together, all uneasiness on Albert's account ceased instantly.

"Madame," said the Viscount Morcerf, advancing towards the countess, "yesterday you were so condescending as to promise me a galop. I am rather late in claiming this gracious promise; but here is my friend, whose character for veracity you well know, and he will assure you the delay arose from no fault of mine."

And as at this moment the music gave the warning

for the waltz, Albert put his arm round the waist of the countess, and disappeared with her in the whirl of dancers. In the meanwhile Franz was considering the singular shudder that had pervaded the Count of Monte-Cristo's frame at the moment when he had been, in some sort, forced to give his hand to Albert.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

ALBERT'S first words to his friend on the following morning contained a request that he would accompany him to visit the count. True, he had warmly and energetically thanked him the previous evening, but services such as he had rendered could never be too often acknowledged.

Franz, who seemed attracted by some invisible influence towards the count, in which terror was strangely mingled, felt an extreme reluctance to permit his friend to be exposed alone to the singular fascination the mysterious count seemed to exercise over him, and therefore made no objection to Albert's request, but at once accompanied him to the desired spot, and, after a short delay, the count joined them in the saloon.

"M. le Comte," said Albert, advancing to meet him, "permit me to repeat the poor thanks I offered last night, and to assure you that the remembrance of all I owe you will never be effaced from my memory."

"My very good friend and excellent neighbour," replied the count, with a smile, "you really exaggerate my trifling exertions. You owe me nothing but some trifle of 20,000 francs, which you have been saved out of your travelling expenses, so that there is not much of a score between us. But you must really permit me to congratulate you on the ease and unconcern with

which you resigned yourself to your fate, and the perfect indifference you manifested as to the turn events might take."

"Upon my word," said Albert, "I deserve no credit for what I could not help—namely, a determination to take everything as I found it, and to let those bandits see, that although men get into troublesome scrapes all over the world, there is no nation but the French can smile even in the face of grim Death himself. All that, however, has nothing to do with my obligations to you, and I now come to ask you, whether, in my own person, my family, or connections, I can in any way serve you? My father, the Comte de Morcerf, although of Spanish origin, possesses considerable influence, both at the court of France and of Madrid, and I unhesitatingly place the best services of myself, and all to whom my life is dear, at your disposal."

"M. de Morcerf," replied the count, "your offer, far from surprising me, is precisely what I expected from you, and I accept it in the same spirit of hearty sincerity with which it is made—nay, I will go still further, and say that I had previously made up my mind to ask a great favour at your hands."

"Oh, pray name it."

"I am wholly a stranger to Paris—it is a city I have never yet seen."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Albert, "that you have reached your present age without visiting the finest capital in the world? I can scarcely credit it."

"Nevertheless it is quite true; still I agree with you in thinking that my present ignorance of the first city in Europe is a reproach to me in every way, and calls for immediate correction."

"So distinguished an individual as yourself," cried Albert, "could scarcely have required an introduction."

"You are most kind; but as regards myself, I can find no merit I possess, save that, as a millionaire, I might have become a partner in the speculations of

M. Aguado and M. Rothschild; but as my motive in travelling to your capital would not have been for the pleasure of dabbling in the funds, I stayed away till some favourable chance should present itself of carrying my wish into execution. Your offer, however, smooths all difficulties, and I have only to ask you, my dear M. de Morcerf" (these words were accompanied by a most peculiar smile), "whether you undertake, upon my arrival in France, to open to me the doors of that fashionable world, of which I know no more than a Huron or native of Cochin-China?"

"Oh, that I do, and with infinite pleasure!" answered Albert; "and so much the more readily as a letter received this morning from my father summons me to Paris in consequence of a treaty of marriage (my dear Franz, do not smile, I beg of you) with a family of high standing, and connected with the very *élite* of Parisian society."

"Then it is a settled affair," said the count; "and I give you my solemn assurance that I only waited an opportunity like the present to realize schemes I have long meditated."

"When do you propose going thither?"

"Have you made up your mind when you shall be there yourself?"

"Certainly I have; in a fortnight or three weeks' time—that is to say, as fast as I can get there!"

"Nay," said the count, "I will give you three months ere I join you; you see I make an ample allowance for all delays and difficulties."

"And in three months' time," said Albert, "you will be at my house?"

"Shall we make a positive appointment for a particular day and hour?" inquired the count; "only let me warn you that I am proverbial for my punctilious exactitude in keeping my engagements."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Albert. "Yes, by all means let us have this rendezvous duly drawn up and attested."

"So be it, then," replied the count; and extending his hand towards an almanac suspended near the chimney-piece, he said, "To-day is the 21st of February;" and drawing out his watch, added, "it is exactly half-past ten o'clock. Now promise me to remember this, and expect me the 21st of May at the same hour in the forenoon."

"Capital!" exclaimed Albert; "and you shall find everything and everybody ready to receive you. I take upon myself to promise that your breakfast shall be smoking hot awaiting your arrival."

"Where do you live?"

"No. 27 Rue du Helder."

"Have you bachelor's apartments there? I hope my coming will not put you to any inconvenience."

"I reside in my father's hotel, but occupy a pavilion at the farther side of the courtyard, entirely separated from the main building."

"Quite sufficient," replied the count, as, taking out his tablets, he wrote down, "No. 27 Rue du Helder, 21st May, half-past ten in the morning." "Now then," said the count, returning his tablets to his pocket, "make yourself perfectly easy; the hand of your timepiece will not be more accurate in marking the time than myself."

"Shall I see you again ere my departure?" asked Albert.

"That will be according to circumstances; but when do you set off?"

"To-morrow evening at five o'clock."

"In that case I must say adieu to you, as I am compelled to go to Naples, and shall not return hither before Saturday evening or Sunday morning.—And you, M. le Baron," pursued the count, addressing Franz, "do you also depart to-morrow?"

"Yes, I go also."

"And whither do you wend your way—to Paris?"

"No, to Venice; I shall remain in Italy for another year or two."

"Then we shall not meet in Paris?"

"I fear I shall not have that honour."

"Well, since we must part," said the count, holding out a hand to each of the young men, "allow me to wish you both a safe and pleasant journey."

The young men then rose, and courteously bowing to their singular acquaintance, quitted the room.

"What is the matter?" asked Albert of Franz, when they had returned to their own apartments; "you seem more than commonly thoughtful."

"I will confess to you, Albert," replied Franz, "that I am deeply puzzled to unravel the real character of this strange count; and the appointment you have made to meet him in Paris fills me with a thousand apprehensions."

"My dear fellow," exclaimed Albert, "what can there possibly be in that to excite uneasiness? Why, you must have lost your senses to imagine either harm or danger can spring from it!"

"Whether I am in my senses or not," answered Franz, "such is my view of the evil effects that may arise from a second meeting with this incomprehensible count, that I would give much you had not crossed his path."

"Did you ever meet him previously to coming hither?"

"I have."

"And where?"

"Will you promise me not to repeat a single word of what I am about to tell you?"

"I promise you to observe the utmost secrecy."

"And you pledge me your honour that nothing shall induce you to divulge it?"

"I pledge my honour."

"Then listen to me."

Franz then related to his friend the history of his excursion to the Isle of Monte-Cristo, and of his finding a party of smugglers there, with whom were two Corsican

bandits. He dwelt with considerable force and energy on the almost magical hospitality he had received from the count, and the magnificence of his entertainment in the grotto of the *Thousand and One Nights*. Then he detailed the conversation overheard by him at the Colosseum, between the mysterious visitant Vampa, in which the count had promised to obtain the release of the bandit Peppino—an engagement which, as our readers are aware, he most faithfully fulfilled.

At last he arrived at the adventure of the preceding night, and the embarrassment in which he found himself placed by not having sufficient cash to complete the sum of six or seven hundred piastres, with the circumstance of his having applied to the count to furnish the money in which he was deficient, an impulse which had led to results so picturesque and satisfactory. Albert listened with the most profound attention.

"My dear Franz," he said, "when, upon receipt of my letter, you found the necessity of asking the count's assistance, you promptly went to him, saying, 'My friend, Albert de Morcerf, is in danger; help me to deliver him.' Was not that nearly what you said?"

"It was."

"Well, then, did he ask you: 'Who is M. Albert de Morcerf; how does he come by his name, his fortune; what are his means of existence; what is his birthplace; of what country is he a native?' Tell me, did he put all these questions to you?"

"I confess he asked me none."

"No; he merely came and freed me from the hands of Signor Vampa, where I can assure you, spite of all my outward appearance of ease and unconcern, I did not very particularly care to remain. Now, then, Franz, when, in return for services so promptly and unhesitatingly rendered, he but asks me in return to do for him what is done daily for any Russian prince or Italian noble who may pass through Paris—merely to introduce him into society—would you have me refuse? My good

fellow, you must have lost your senses to think it possible I could act with such cold-blooded policy."

And this time it must be confessed that, in direct opposition to the ordinary discussions between the young men, all the good and powerful reasons were on Albert's side.

"Well," said Franz, with a sigh, "do as you please, my dear viscount, for your arguments are beyond my powers of refutation. Still, in spite of all, you must admit that this Count of Monte-Cristo is a most singular personage."

"He is a philanthropist," answered the other; "and, no doubt, his motive in visiting Paris is to compete for the Monthyon prize, given, as you are aware, to whoever shall be proved to have most materially advanced the interests of virtue and humanity. If my vote and interest can obtain it for him, I will readily give him the one and promise the other. And now, my dear Franz, let us talk of something else. Come, shall we take our luncheon, and then pay a late visit to St. Peter's?"

Franz silently assented; and the following afternoon, at half-past five o'clock, the young men parted, Albert de Morcerf to return to Paris, and Franz d'Epinay to pass a fortnight at Venice. But ere he entered his travelling carriage, Albert, in the fear of his expected guest forgetting the engagement he had entered into, placed in the care of the waiter of the hotel a card to be delivered to the Count of Monte-Cristo, on which, beneath the name of Albert de Morcerf, he had written in pencil,—

"27 Rue du Helder, on the 21st May, half-past 10 a.m."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE GUESTS.

In the house in the Rue du Helder, where Albert had invited the Count of Monte-Cristo, everything was being prepared on the morning of the 21st of May to fulfil the engagement.

Albert de Morcerf inhabited a pavilion situated at a corner of a large court, and directly opposite another building, in which were the servants' apartments. Two windows only of the pavilion faced the street; three other windows looked into the court, and two at the back into the garden. Between the court and the garden, built in the heavy style of the imperial architecture, was the large and fashionable dwelling of the Count and Countess de Morcerf. A high wall surrounded the whole of the hotel, surmounted at intervals by vases filled with flowers, and broken in the centre by a large gate of gilt iron, which served as the carriage entrance. A small door, close to the lodge of the concierge, gave ingress and egress to the servants and masters when they were on foot.

On the morning of the appointment, the young man had established himself in the small salon downstairs. There, on a table, surrounded at some distance by a large and luxurious divan, every species of tobacco known, from the yellow tobacco of Petersburg to the black tobacco of Sinai, the Maryland, the Porto-Rico, and the Latakieh, was exposed in those pots of crackled earthenware of which the Dutch are so fond; beside them, in boxes of fragrant wood, were ranged, according to their size and quality, pueros, regalias, havannas, and manillas; and, in an open cabinet, a collection of German pipes, of chibouques, with their amber mouthpieces ornamented with coral, and of narguellahs with

their long tubes of morocco, awaited the caprice or the sympathy of the smokers.

At a quarter to ten a valet entered. He composed, with a little groom named John, and who only spoke English, all Albert's establishment, although the cook of the hotel was always at his service, and on great occasions the count's chasseur also. This valet, whose name was Germain, and who enjoyed the entire confidence of his young master, held in one hand a number of papers, and in the other a packet of letters, which he gave to Albert. Albert glanced carelessly at the different missives, selected two written in a small and delicate hand, and inclosed in scented envelopes, opened them, and perused their contents with some attention.

"How did these letters come?" said he.

"One by the post; Madame Danglars's footman left the other."

"Let Madame Danglars know that I accept the place she offers me in her box. Wait: then, during the day, tell Rosa that when I leave the Opera I will sup with her, as she wishes. Take her six bottles of different wine—Cyprus, sherry, and Malaga—and a barrel of Ostend oysters; get them at Borel's, and be sure you say they are for me."

"At what o'clock, sir, do you breakfast?"

"What time is it now?"

"A-quarter to ten."

"Very well, at half-past ten. Debray will perhaps be obliged to go to the minister; and besides" (Albert looked at his tablets), "it is the hour I told the count, 21st May, at half-past ten; and though I do not much rely upon his promise, I wish to be punctual. Is Madame la Comtesse up yet?"

"If M. le Vicomte wishes, I will inquire."

"Yes, ask her for one of her liqueur cellarets, mine is incomplete; and tell her I shall have the honour of seeing her about three o'clock, and that I request permission to introduce some one to her."

A moment after, a carriage stopped before the door, and the servant announced M. Lucien Debray. A tall young man, with light hair, clear gray eyes, and thin and compressed lips, dressed in a blue coat with buttons of gold beautifully carved, a white neckcloth, and a tortoise-shell eyeglass suspended by a silken thread, and which, by an effort of the superciliary and zygomatic nerves, he fixed in his eye, entered with a half-official air, without smiling or speaking.

"Good-morning, Lucien! good-morning!" said Albert; "your punctuality really alarms me. What do I say? Punctuality! You whom I expected last, you arrive at five minutes to ten, when the time fixed was half-past! Have ministers resigned?"

"No, my dear fellow," returned the young man, seating himself on the divan; "reassure yourself. We are tottering always, but we never fall; and I begin to believe that we shall pass into a state of immobility, and then the affairs of the Peninsula will completely consolidate us."

"Ah, true! you drive Don Carlos out of Spain."

"No, no, my dear fellow, do not confound our plans. We take him to the other side of the French frontier, and offer him hospitality at Bourges."

"At Bourges?"

"Yes; he has not much to complain of. Bourges is the capital of Charles VII. Do you not know that all Paris knew it yesterday, and the day before it had already transpired on the Bourse, and M. Danglars (I do not know by what means that man contrives to obtain intelligence as soon as we do) made a million (£40,000)?"

"And you another order, for I see you have a blue riband at your button-hole."

"Yes, they sent me the order of Charles III.," returned Debray carelessly.

"Come, do not affect indifference, but confess you were pleased to have it."

"Oh, it is very well as a finish to the toilette. It looks very neat on a black coat buttoned up."

"And makes you resemble the Prince of Wales or the Duke de Reichstadt."

"It is for that reason you see me so early."

"Because you have the order of Charles III., and you wish to announce the good news to me?"

"No, because I passed the night writing letters—five-and-twenty dispatches. I returned home at day-break, and strove to sleep; but my head ached, and I got up to have a ride for an hour. At the Bois de Boulogne ennui and hunger attacked me at once—two enemies who rarely accompany each other, and who are yet leagued against me, a sort of Carlo-Republican alliance. I then recollected you gave a breakfast this morning, and here I am. I am hungry, feed me; I am bored, amuse me."

"It is my duty as your host," returned Albert, ringing the bell, whilst Lucien turned over with his gold-mounted cane the papers that lay on the table.—"Germain, a glass of sherry and a biscuit.—In the meantime, my dear Lucien, here are cigars—contraband, of course—try them, and persuade the minister to sell us such instead of poisoning us with cabbage-leaves."

"Really, my dear count," replied Lucien, lighting a manilla at a rose-coloured taper that burnt in a stand beautifully enamelled, "how happy you are to have nothing to do; you do not know your own good fortune!"

"And what would you do, my dear diplomatist," replied Morcerf, with a slight degree of irony in his voice, "if you did nothing? Well, I will amuse you."

"How?"

"By introducing to you a new acquaintance."

"A man or a woman?"

"A man."

"I know so many already."

"But you do not know this man."

"Where does he come from—the end of the world?"

"Farther still, perhaps."

"The devil! I hope he does not bring our breakfast with him."

"Oh no, our breakfast comes from my father's kitchen. Are you hungry?"

"Humiliating as such a confession is, I am. But I dined at M. de Villefort's, and lawyers always give you very bad dinners. You would think they felt some remorse. Did you ever remark that?"

"Ah! deprecate other persons' dinners; you ministers give such splendid ones."

"Yes, but we do not invite people of fashion. If we were not forced to entertain a parcel of country boobies because they think and vote with us, we should never dream of dining at home, I assure you."

"Well, take another glass of sherry and another biscuit."

"Willingly. Your Spanish wine is excellent. You see we were quite right to pacify that country."

"M. Beauchamp," announced the servant.

"Enter, enter," said Albert, rising and advancing to meet the young man.

"Here is Debray, who defends you without reading you, so he says."

"He is quite right," returned Beauchamp, "for I criticise him without knowing what he does.—Good day, commander!"

"Ah! you know that already," said the private secretary, smiling, and shaking hands with him.

"*Pardon!*"

"And what do they say of it in the world?"

"In which world?—we have so many worlds in the year of grace 1838."

"In the entire political world, of which you are one of the leaders."

"They say that it is quite fair, and that you now so much real that you must reap a little blue."

"Come, come, that is not bad!" said Lucien. "Why do you not join our party, my dear Beauchamp? With your talents you would make your fortune in three or four years."

"I only await one thing before following your advice —that is, a minister who will hold office for six months. My dear Albert, one word; for I must get poor Lucien a respite. Do we breakfast or dine? I must go to the Chamber, for our life is not an idle one."

"You only breakfast; I await two persons, and the instant they arrive we shall sit down to table."

CHAPTER XL.

THE BREAKFAST.

"And what sort of persons do you expect to breakfast?" said Beauchamp.

"A gentleman, and a diplomatist."

"Then we shall have to wait two hours for the gentleman, and three for the diplomatist. I shall come back to dessert; keep me some strawberries, coffee, and cigars. I shall take a cutlet on my way to the Chamber."

"Do not do anything of the sort; for were the gentleman a Montmorency, and the diplomatist a Metternich, we will breakfast at eleven: in the meantime, follow Debray's example, and take a glass of sherry and a biscuit."

"Be it so; I will stay. I must do something to distract my thoughts."

"You are like Debray; and yet it seems to me that when the minister is out of spirits, the opposition ought to be joyous."

"Ah, you do not know with what I am threatened. I shall hear this morning M. Danglars make a speech at the Chamber of Deputies, and at his wife's this even-

ing I shall hear the tragedy of a peer of France. The devil take the constitutional government. And since we had our choice, as they say at least, how could we choose that?"

"I understand; you must lay in a stock of hilarity."

"Do not run down M. Danglars's speeches," said Debray; "he votes for you, for he belongs to the opposition."

"*Pardieu!* that is exactly the worst of all. I am waiting until you send him to speak at the Luxembourg, to laugh at my ease."

"My dear friend," said Albert to Beauchamp, "it is plain the affairs of Spain are settled, for you are most desperately out of humour this morning. Recollect that Parisian gossip has spoken of a marriage between myself and Mlle. Eugénie Danglars; I cannot in conscience, therefore, let you run down the speeches of a man who will one day say to me, 'M. le Vicomte, you know I give my daughter eighty thousand pounds.'"

"Ah, this marriage will never take place," said Beauchamp. "The king has made him a baron, and can make him a peer, but he cannot make him a gentleman; and the Count de Morcerf is too aristocratic to consent, for the paltry sum of eighty thousand pounds, to a *mésalliance*. The Viscount de Morcerf can only wed a marchioness."

"But eighty thousand pounds is a nice little sum," replied Morcerf.

"It is the social capital of a theatre on the boulevard, or a railroad from the Jardin des Plantes to La Râpée."

"Never mind what he says, Morcerf," said Debray, "do you marry her. You marry a ticket of a money-bag, it is true. Well, but what does that matter? it is better to have a blazon less and a figure more on it. You have seven martlets on your arms: give three to your wife, and you will still have four. That is one more than M. de Guise had, who so nearly became king of France, and whose cousin was emperor of Germany."

"On my word, I think you are right, Lucien," said Albert absently.

"To be sure; besides, every millionaire is as noble as a bastard—that is, he can be."

"Do not say that, Debray," returned Beauchamp, laughing, "for here is Château-Renaud, who, to cure you of your mania for paradoxes, will pass the sword of Renaud de Montauban, his ancestor, through your body."

"M. de Château-Renaud! M. Maximilian Morrel!" said the servant, announcing two fresh guests.

"Now, then, to breakfast," said Beauchamp; "for, if I remember, you told me you only expected two persons, Albert."

"Morrel!" muttered Albert—"Morrel! Who is he?"

But before he had finished, M. de Château-Renaud, a handsome young man of thirty, took Albert's hand.

"My dear Albert," said he, "let me introduce to you M. Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis, my friend, and what is more—however, the man speaks for himself—my preserver. Salute my hero, viscount."

And he stepped on one side, exhibiting the large and open brow, the piercing eyes, and black moustache of the fine and noble young man whom our readers have already seen at Marseilles, under circumstances sufficiently dramatic not to be forgotten. A rich uniform, half French, half Oriental, set off his broad chest, decorated with the order of the Legion of Honour, and his graceful and stalwart figure.

The young officer bowed with easy and elegant politeness.

"Monsieur," said Albert, with affectionate courtesy, "M. le Comte Château-Renaud knew how much pleasure this introduction would give me. You are his friend; be ours also."

"Well said!" interrupted Château-Renaud; "and pray that if you should ever be in a similar predicament, he may do as much for you as he did for me."

"What has he done?" asked Albert.

"Oh, nothing worth speaking of," said Morrel. "M. de Château-Renaud exaggerates."

"Not worth speaking of!" cried Château-Renaud. "Life is not worth speaking of. That is rather too philosophical, on my word, Morrel. It is very well for you, who risk your life every day; but for me, who only did so once——"

"What time do you breakfast, Albert?"

"At half-past ten."

"Precisely?" asked Debray, taking out his watch.

"Oh, you will give me five minutes' grace," replied Morcerf, "for I also expect a preserver."

"Of whom?"

"Of myself," cried Morcerf. "*Parbleu!* do you think I cannot be saved as well as any one else? Our breakfast is a philanthropic one; and we shall have at table—at least I hope so—two benefactors of humanity."

"What shall we do?" said Debray; "we have only one Monthyon prize."

"Well, it will be given to some one who has done nothing to deserve it," said Beauchamp; "that is the way the Academy mostly escapes from the dilemma."

"And where does he come from?" asked Debray. "You have already answered the question once, but so vaguely that I venture to put it a second time."

"Really," said Albert, "I do not know. When I invited him three months ago, he was then at Rome; but since that time who knows where he may have gone?"

"And you think him capable of being exact?" demanded Debray.

"I think him capable of everything."

"Well, with the five minutes' grace, we have only ten left."

"I will profit by them to tell you something about my guest."

"I beg pardon!" interrupted Beauchamp; "are there any materials for an article in what you are going to tell us?"

"Yes, and for a most curious one."

"Go on, then, for I see I shall not get to the Chamber this morning, and I must make up for it."

"I was at Rome the last Carnival."

"We know that," said Beauchamp.

"Yes; but what you do not know is that I was carried off by bandits."

"There are no bandits," cried Debray.

"Yes there are, and most hideous or rather most admirable ones, for I found them ugly enough to frighten me."

"Come, my dear Albert," said Debray, "confess that your cook is behindhand, that the oysters have not arrived from Ostend or Marennes, and that, like Madame de Maintenon, you are going to replace the dish by a story. Say so at once; we are sufficiently well bred to excuse you, and to listen to your history, fabulous as it promises to be."

"And I say to you, fabulous as it may seem, I tell it as a true one from beginning to end. The brigands had carried me off, and conducted me to a most gloomy spot, called the Catacombs of Saint-Sebastian."

"I know it," said Château-Renaud; "I narrowly escaped catching a fever there."

"And I did more than that," replied Morcerf, "for I caught one. I was informed I was a prisoner until I paid the sum of 4,000 Roman crowns—about 24,000 francs (£960). Unfortunately, I had not above 1,500. I was at the end of my journey and of my credit. I wrote to Franz—and were he here he would confirm every word—I wrote then to Franz, that if he did not come with the 4,000 crowns before six, at ten minutes past I should have gone to join the blessed saints and glorious martyrs, in whose company I had the honour of being. And Signor Luigi Vampa—such was the name

of the chief of these bandits—would have scrupulously kept his word."

"But Franz did come with the 4,000 crowns?" said Château-Renaud. "A man whose name is Franz d'Epinay or Albert de Morcerf has not much difficulty in procuring them."

"No; he arrived accompanied simply by the guest I am going to present to you."

"Ah, this gentleman is a Hercules killing Cacus, a Perseus freeing Andromeda!"

"No; he is a man about my own size."

"Armed to the teeth?"

"He had not even a knitting-needle."

"But he paid your ransom?"

"He said two words to the chief and I was free."

"And they apologized to him for having carried you off?" said Beauchamp.

"Just so."

"Why, he is a second Ariosto."

"No; his name is the Count of Monte-Cristo."

"There is not a Count of Monte-Cristo," said Debray.

"I do not think so," added Château-Renaud, with the air of a man who knows the whole of the European nobility perfectly.

"Does any one know anything of a Count of Monte-Cristo?"

"He comes possibly from the Holy Land, and one of his ancestors possessed Calvary, as the Mortemarts did the Dead Sea."

"I think I can assist your researches," said Maximilian. "Monte-Cristo is a little island I have often heard spoken of by the old sailors my father employed—a grain of sand in the centre of the Mediterranean, an atom in the infinite."

"Precisely!" cried Albert. "Well, he of whom I speak is the lord and master of this grain of sand, of this atom; he has purchased the title of count somewhere in Tuscany."

"He is rich, then?"

"I believe so."

"But that ought to be visible."

"That is what deceives you, Debray."

"I do not understand you."

"Have you read the 'Arabian Nights'?"

"What a question!"

"Well, do you know if the persons you see there are rich or poor, if their sacks of wheat are not rubies or diamonds? They seem like poor fishermen, and suddenly they open some mysterious cavern filled with the wealth of the Indies."

"Afterwards?"

"My Count of Monte-Cristo is one of those fishermen. He has even a name taken from the book, since he calls himself 'Sinbad the Sailor,' and has a cave filled with gold."

"And you have seen this cavern, Morcerf?" asked Beauchamp.

"No, but Franz has. For Heaven's sake, not a word of this before him. Franz went in with his eyes blindfolded, and was served by mutes and women to whom Cleopatra was nothing. Only he is not quite sure about the women, for they did not come in until after he had taken some hatchis, so that what he took for women might have been simply a row of statues."

The two young men looked at Morcerf as if to say,—

"Are you mad, or are you laughing at us?"

"And I also," said Morrel thoughtfully, "have heard something like this from an old sailor named Penelon."

"Ah!" cried Albert, "it is very lucky that M. Morrel comes to aid me. You are vexed, are you not, that he thus gives a clue to the labyrinth?"

"My dear Albert," said Debray, "what you tell us is so extraordinary."

"Rail on, rail on at your ease, gentlemen," said Morcerf, somewhat piqued. "When I look at you Parisians, idlers on the Boulevard de Gand or the Bois

de Boulogne, and think of this man, it seems to me we are not of the same race."

"I am highly flattered," returned Beauchamp.

"At the same time," added Château-Renaud, "your Count of Monte-Cristo is a very fine fellow,. always excepting his little arrangements with the Italian banditti."

"There are no Italian banditti!" said Debray.

"No vampire!" cried Beauchamp.

"No Count of Monte-Cristo!" added Debray. "There is half-past ten striking, Albert!"

"Confess you have dreamed this, and let us sit down to breakfast," continued Beauchamp.

But the sound of the clock had not died away when Germain announced,—

"His Excellency the Count of Monte-Cristo."

The involuntary start every one gave proved how much Morcerf's narrative had impressed them, and Albert himself could not prevent himself from feeling a sudden emotion. He had not heard a carriage stop in the street, or steps in the antechamber; the door had itself opened noiselessly.

The count appeared, dressed with the greatest simplicity; but the most fastidious dandy could have found nothing to cavil at in his toilet; every article of dress—hat, coat, gloves, and boots—were from the first makers. He seemed scarcely five-and-thirty; but what struck everybody was his extreme resemblance to the portrait Debray had drawn.

The count advanced smiling into the centre of the room, and approached Albert, who hastened towards him holding out his hand.

"M. le Comte," he said, "I was announcing your visit to some of my friends, whom I had invited in consequence of the promise you did me the honour to make, and whom I now present to you. They are M. le Comte de Château-Renaud, whose nobility goes back to the twelve peers, and whose ancestors had a

place at the Round Table; M. Lucien Debray, private secretary to the Ministre de l'Intérieur; M. Beauchamp, an editor of a paper, and the terror of the French government, but of whom, in spite of his celebrity, you have not heard of in Italy, since his paper is prohibited there; and M. Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis."

At this name the count, who had hitherto saluted every one with courtesy, but at the same time with coldness and formality, stepped a pace forward, and a slight tinge of red coloured his pale cheeks.

"You wear the uniform of the new French conquerors, monsieur," said he. "It is a handsome uniform."

No one could have said what caused the count's voice to vibrate so deeply, and what made his eye flash, which was in general so clear, lustrous, and limpid when he pleased.

"You have never seen our Africans, M. le Comte?" said Albert.

"Never," replied the count, who was by this time perfectly master of himself again.

"Well, beneath this uniform beats one of the bravest and noblest hearts in the whole army."

"Oh, M. de Morcerf!" interrupted Morrel.

"Let me go on, captain! And we have just heard," continued Albert, "of a fresh action of monsieur, and so heroic a one, that, although I have seen him to-day for the first time, I request you to allow me to introduce him as my friend."

At these words it was still possible to remark in Monte-Cristo that fixed gaze, that passing colour, and that slight trembling of the eyelid, that showed his emotion.

"Ah, you have a noble heart!" said the count; "so much the better."

"Gentlemen," said Albert, "Germain informs me breakfast is ready.—My dear count, allow me to show you the way."

They passed silently into the breakfast-room; every one took his place.

"Gentlemen," said the count, seating himself, "permit me to make a confession which must form my excuse for any *inconvenances* I may commit. I am a stranger, and a stranger to such a degree that this is the first time I have ever been at Paris. The French way of living is utterly unknown to me, and up to the present time I have followed the Eastern customs, which are entirely in contrast to the Parisian. I beg you, therefore, to excuse if you find anything in me too Turkish, too Italian, or too Arabian. Now, then, let us breakfast."

"With what an air he says all this!" muttered Beauchamp; "decidedly he is a great man."

"A great man in his country," added Debray.

"A great man in every country, M. Debray," said Château-Renaud.

The count was, it may be remembered, a most temperate guest. Albert remarked this, expressing his fears lest, at the outset, the Parisian mode of life should displease the traveller in the most essential point.

"My dear count," said he, "I fear one thing, and that is, that the fare of the Rue de Helder is not so much to your taste as that of the Place d'Espagne. I ought to have consulted you on the point, and have had some dishes prepared expressly."

"Did you know me better," returned the count, smiling, "you would not give one thought of such a thing for a traveller like myself. I eat everywhere, and of everything, only I eat but little; and to-day, that you reproach me with my want of appetite, is my day of appetite, for I have not eaten since yesterday morning."

"What!" cried all the guests, "you have not eaten for four-and-twenty hours?"

"No," replied the count; "I was forced to go out of my road to obtain some information near Nîmes, so that I was somewhat late, and therefore I did not choose to stop."

"And you ate in your carriage?" asked Morcerf.

"No; I slept, as I generally do when I am weary

without having the courage to amuse myself, or when I am hungry without feeling inclined to eat."

"But you can sleep when you please, monsieur?" said Morrel.

"Yes."

"You have a receipt for it?"

"An infallible one."

"That would be invaluable to us in Africa, who have not always any food to eat, and rarely anything to drink."

"Yes," said Monte-Cristo; "but, unfortunately, a receipt excellent for a man like myself would be very dangerous applied to an army, which might not awake when it was needed."

"May we inquire what is this receipt?" asked Debray.

"Oh, yes," returned Monte-Cristo; "I make no secret of it. It is a mixture of excellent opium, which I fetched myself from Canton in order to have it pure, and the best hatchis which grows in the east—that is, between the Tigris and Euphrates. These two ingredients are mixed in equal proportions and formed into pills. Ten minutes after one is taken the effect is produced. Ask M. le Baron Franz d'Epinay; I think he tasted them one day."

"Yes," replied Morcerf; "he said something about it to me."

"But," said Beauchamp, who, in his capacity of journalist, was very incredulous, "you always carry this drug about you?"

"Always."

"Would it be an indiscretion to ask to see those precious pills?" continued Beauchamp, hoping to take him at a disadvantage.

"No, monsieur," returned the count; and he drew from his pocket a marvellous *bonbonnière*, formed out of a single emerald, and closed by a golden lid, which unscrewed and gave passage to a small ball of a greenish colour, and about the size of a pea. This ball had an

acrid and penetrating odour. There were four or five more in the emerald, which would contain about a dozen.

The *bonbonnière* passed round the table, but it was more to examine the admirable emerald than to see the pills that it passed from hand to hand.

"And is it your cook who prepares these pills?" asked Beauchamp.

"Oh no, monsieur," replied Monte-Cristo; "I do not thus betray my enjoyments to the vulgar. I am a tolerable chemist, and prepare my pills myself."

"This is a magnificent emerald, and the largest I have ever seen," said Château-Renaud, "although my mother has some remarkable family jewels."

"I have three similar ones," returned Monte-Cristo. "I gave one to the Grand Signior, who mounted it in his sabre; another to our holy father the Pope, who had it set in his tiara opposite to nearly as large though not so fine a one, given by the Emperor Napoleon to his predecessor, Pius VII. I kept the third for myself, and I had it hollowed out, which reduced its value, but rendered it more commodious for the purpose I intended it for."

Every one looked at Monte-Cristo with astonishment. He spoke with so much simplicity that it was evident he spoke the truth, or that he was mad. However, the sight of the emerald made them naturally incline to the former belief.

"And what did these two sovereigns give you in exchange for these magnificent presents?" asked Debray.

"The Grand Signior, the liberty of a woman," replied the count; "the Pope, the life of a man; so that once in my life I have been as powerful as if Heaven had made me come into the world on the steps of a throne."

"And it was Peppino you saved, was it not?" cried Morcerf; "it was for him that you obtained pardon?"

"Perhaps," returned the count, smiling.

"Monsieur le Comte, you have no idea what pleasure

it gives me to hear you speak thus," said Morcerf. "I had announced you beforehand to my friends as an enchanter of the 'Arabian Nights,' a wizard of the middle ages; but the Parisians are people so subtle in paradoxes, that they mistake for caprices of the imagination the most incontestible truths, when these truths do not form a part of their daily existence."

"My dear vicomte," returned Monte-Cristo, "I do not see, in all I have done, anything that merits, either from you or these gentlemen, the pretended eulogies I have received. Besides, you know, I had the idea that you could introduce me into some of the Paris salons when I came to France. You might, some time ago, have looked upon this resolution as a vague project, but to-day you see it was a reality, and you must submit to it under penalty of breaking your word."

"I will keep it," returned Morcerf; "but I fear that you will be much disappointed, accustomed as you are to picturesque events and to fantastic horizons. There is but one service I can render you, and for that I place myself entirely at your orders—that is, to present, or make my friends present, you everywhere. Besides, you have no need of any one to introduce you; with your name, and your fortune, and your talent" (Monte-Cristo bowed with a somewhat ironical smile), "you can present yourself everywhere, and be well received. I can be useful in one way only: if knowledge of Parisian habits, of the means of rendering yourself comfortable, or of the bazaars, can assist, you may depend on me to find you a fitting dwelling here. I dare offer to share my apartments with you, as I shared yours at Rome—I, who do not possess egotism, but am yet egotistical *par excellence;* for, except myself, these rooms would not contain a shadow, unless it were the shadow of a female."

"Ah," said the count, "that is a most conjugal reservation. I recollect that at Rome you said something of a projected marriage. May I congratulate you?"

"The affair is still in projection."

"And he who says in 'projection' means 'already decided,'" said Debray.

"No," replied Morcerf. "My father is most anxious about it; and I hope, ere long, to introduce you, if not to my wife, at least to my intended—Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars."

"Eugénie Danglars!" said Monte-Cristo. "Tell me, is not her father M. le Baron Danglars?"

"Yes," returned Morcerf; "a baron of a new creation."

"What matter," said Monte-Cristo, "if he has rendered the state services which merit this distinction?"

"Enormous ones," answered Beauchamp. "Although in reality a Liberal, he negotiated a loan of six millions (£240,000) for Charles X. in 1829, who made him a baron and chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur; so that he wears the ribbon, not, as you would think, in his waistcoat-pocket, but at his button-hole."

"Ah," interrupted Morcerf, laughing, "Beauchamp, Beauchamp, keep that for the *Charivari*, but spare my future father-in-law before me." Then, turning to Monte-Cristo, "You just now pronounced his name as if you knew the baron?"

"I do not know him," returned Monte-Cristo, "but I shall probably soon make his acquaintance, for I have a credit opened with him by the house of Richard and Blount of London, Arstein and Eskeles of Vienna, and Thomson and French of Rome."

As he pronounced the two last names, the count glanced at Maximilian Morrel.

If the stranger expected to produce an effect on Morrel, he was not mistaken. Maximilian started as if he had been electrified.

"Thomson and French!" said he; "do you know this house, monsieur?"

"They are my bankers in the capital of the Christian world," returned the count quietly. "Can my influence with them be of any service to you?"

"Oh, M. le Comte, you could assist me perhaps in

researches which have been, up to the present, fruitless. This house in past years did ours a great service, and has, I know not for what reason, always denied having rendered us this service."

"I shall be at your orders," said Monte-Cristo, inclining himself.

"But," continued Morcerf, "*à propos* of Danglars, we have strangely wandered from the subject. We were speaking of a suitable habitation for the Count of Monte-Cristo. Come, gentlemen, let us all propose some place; where shall we lodge this new guest in our great capital?"

"Faubourg Saint-Germain," said Château-Renaud. "The count will find there a charming hotel, with a court and garden."

"Bah! Château-Renaud," returned Debray, "you only know your dull and gloomy Faubourg Saint-Germain. Do not pay any attention to him, M. le Comte; live in the Chaussée d'Antin, that's the real centre of Paris."

"Boulevard de l'Opéra," said Beauchamp; "on the first floor—a house with a balcony. M. le Comte will have his cushions of silver cloth brought there, and as he smokes his chibouque see all Paris pass before him."

"You have no idea, then, Morrel?" asked Chateau-Renaud. "You do not propose anything?"

"Oh, yes," returned the young man, smiling. "On the contrary, I have one; but I expected the count would be tempted by one of the brilliant proposals made him; yet as he has not replied to any of them, I will venture to offer him a suite of apartments in a charming hotel, in the Pompadour style, that my sister has inhabited for a year, in the Rue Meslay."

"You have a sister?" asked the count.

"Yes, monsieur, a most excellent sister."

"Married?"

"Nearly nine years."

"Happy?" asked the count again.

"As happy as it is permitted to a human creature to be," replied Maximilian. "She married the man she

loved, who remained faithful to us in our fallen fortunes —Emmanuel Herbaut."

Monte-Cristo smiled imperceptibly.

"I live there during my leave of absence," continued Maximilian; "and I shall be, together with my brother-in-law, Emmanuel, at the disposition of M. le Comte whenever he thinks fit to honour us."

"One minute!" cried Albert, without giving Monte-Cristo the time to reply. "Take care: you are going to immure a traveller—Sinbad the Sailor—a man who comes to see Paris; you are going to make a patriarch of him."

"Oh no," said Morrel. "My sister is five-and-twenty, my brother-in-law is thirty; they are gay, young, and happy. Besides, M. le Comte will be in his own house, and only see them when he thinks fit to do so."

"Thanks, monsieur," said Monte-Cristo, "I shall content myself with being presented to your sister and her husband, if you will do me the honour to introduce me; but I cannot accept the offer of any one of these gentlemen, since my habitation is already prepared."

"What!" cried Morcerf, "you are, then, going to a hotel; that will be very dull for you."

"Was I so badly lodged at Rome?" said Monte-Cristo, smiling.

"*Parbleu!* at Rome you spent fifty thousand piastres in furnishing your apartments, but I presume that you are not disposed to spend a similar sum every day."

"It is not that which deterred me," replied Monte-Cristo; "but as I determined to have a house to myself I sent on my valet-de-chambre, and he ought by this time to have bought the house and furnished it."

"We must content ourselves, then," said Beauchamp, "with rendering M. le Comte all the little services in our power. I, in my quality of journalist, open all the theatres to him."

"Thanks, monsieur," returned Monte-Cristo; "my steward has orders to take a box at each theatre."

"Is your steward also a Nubian?" asked Debray.

"No, he is a countryman of yours, if a Corsican is a countryman of any one's. But you know him, M. de Morcerf."

"Is it that excellent M. Bertuccio, who understands hiring windows so well?"

"Yes; you saw him the day I had the honour of receiving you. He has been a soldier, a smuggler—in fact, everything. I would not be quite sure that he has not been mixed up with the police for some trifle—a stab with a knife, for instance."

"And you have chosen this honest citizen for your steward?" said Debray. "Of how much does he rob you every year?"

"On my word," replied the count, "not more than another. I am sure he answers my purpose, knows no impossibility, and so I keep him."

They had long since passed to dessert and cigars.

"My dear Albert," said Debray, rising, "it is half-past two. Your guest is charming; but you leave the best company to go into the worst sometimes. I must return to the minister's. I will tell him of the count, and we shall soon know who he is."

"Take care," returned Albert; "no one has been able to accomplish that."

"Oh, we have three millions for our police. It is true they are almost always spent beforehand; but no matter, we shall still have fifty thousand francs to spend for this purpose."

"And when you know, will you tell me?"

"I promise you. *Au revoir*, Albert.—Gentlemen, good-morning."

As he left the room, Debray called out loudly,—

"My carriage."

"Bravo!" said Beauchamp to Albert. "I shall not go to the Chamber, but I have something better to offer my readers than a speech of M. Danglars."

"For Heaven's sake, Beauchamp," returned Morcerf,

"do not deprive me of the merit of introducing him everywhere. Is he not peculiar?"

"He is more than that," replied Château-Renaud; "he is one of the most extraordinary men I ever saw in my life.—Are you coming, Morrel?"

"Directly I have given my card to M. le Comte, who has promised to pay us a visit at Rue Meslay, No. 14."

"Be sure I shall not fail to do so," returned the count, bowing.

And Maximilian Morrel left the room with the Baron de Château-Renaud, leaving Monte-Cristo alone with Morcerf.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE PRESENTATION.

When Albert found himself alone with Monte-Cristo, "M. le Comte," said he, "allow me to commence my ciceroneship by showing you a specimen of a bachelor's apartment. You, who are accustomed to the palaces of Italy, can amuse yourself by calculating in how many square feet a young man who is not the worst lodged in Paris can live. As we pass from one room to the other, I will open the windows to let you breathe."

Monte-Cristo had already seen the breakfast-room and the salon on the ground floor. Albert led him first to his atelier, which was, as we have said, his favourite apartment. Monte-Cristo was a worthy appreciator of all that Albert had collected here—old cabinets, Japan porcelain, Oriental stuffs, Venice glass, arms from all parts of the world—everything was familiar to him: and at the first glance he recognized their date, their country, and their origin.

From the salon they passed into the bedchamber; it was a model of taste and simple elegance. A single

portrait, signed Leopold Robert, shone in its carved and gilded frame.

This portrait attracted the Count of Monte-Cristo's attention, for he made three rapid steps in the chamber, and stopped suddenly before it. It was the portrait of a young woman of five or six and twenty, with a dark complexion, and light and lustrous eyes veiled beneath their long lashes. She wore the picturesque costume of the Catalan fisherwomen, a red and black bodice, and the golden pins in her hair. She was looking at the sea, and her shadow was defined on the blue ocean and sky.

The light was so faint in the room that Albert did not perceive the paleness that spread itself over the count's visage, or the nervous heaving of his chest and shoulders. Silence prevailed for an instant, during which Monte-Cristo gazed intently on the picture.

"You have there a most charming mistress, viscount," said the count, in a perfectly calm tone; "and this costume—a ball costume, doubtless—becomes her admirably."

"Ah, monsieur!" returned Albert, "I would never forgive you this mistake if you had seen another picture beside this. You do not know my mother. She it is whom you see here; she had her portrait painted thus six or eight years ago. This costume is a fancy one, it appears, and the resemblance is so great that I think I still see my mother the same as she was in 1830. The countess had this portrait painted during the count's absence. She doubtless intended giving him an agreeable surprise; but, strange to say, this portrait seemed to displease my father, and the value of the picture, which is, as you see, one of the best works of Leopold Robert, could not overcome his dislike to it. The picture seems to have a malign influence, for my mother rarely comes here without looking at it, and still more rarely does she look at it without weeping. This disagreement is the only one that has ever taken place between the count

and countess, who are still as much united, although married more than twenty years, as the first day of their wedding."

Monte-Cristo glanced rapidly at Albert, as if to seek a hidden meaning in his words; but it was evident the young man uttered them in the simplicity of his heart.

"Now," said Albert, "that you have seen all my treasures, allow me to offer them to you, unworthy as they are. Consider yourself as in your own house; and, to put yourself still more at your ease, pray accompany me to the apartments of M. de Morcerf, to whom I wrote from Rome an account of the services you rendered me, and to whom I announced your promised visit, and I may say that both the count and countess anxiously desire to thank you in person. You are somewhat *blasé*, I know, and family scenes have not much effect on Sinbad the Sailor, who has seen so many others. However, accept what I propose to you as an initiation into Parisian life—a life of politeness, visiting, and introductions."

Monte-Cristo bowed without making any answer. He accepted the offer without enthusiasm and without regret, as one of those conventions of society which every gentleman looks upon as a duty. Albert summoned his servant, and ordered him to acquaint Monsieur and Madame de Morcerf of the arrival of the Count of Monte-Cristo.

Albert followed him with the count. When they arrived at the antechamber, above the door was visible a shield, which, by its rich ornaments and its harmony with the rest of the furniture, indicated the importance the owner attached to this blazon. Monte-Cristo stopped and examined it attentively.

"Azure seven merlets, or, placed bender," said he. "These are, doubtless, your family arms? Excuse my putting such a question to you."

"It is not indiscreet," returned Morcerf, with the

simplicity of conviction. "You have guessed rightly. These are our arms—that is, those of my father; but they are, as you see, joined to another shield, which has gules, a silver tower, which are my mother's. By her side I am Spanish; but the family of Morcerf is French, and, I have heard, one of the oldest of the south of France."

"Yes," replied Monte-Cristo, "these blazons prove that. Almost all the armed pilgrims that went to the Holy Land took for their arms either a cross, in honour of their mission, or birds of passage, in sign of the long voyage they were about to undertake, and which they hoped to accomplish on the wings of faith. One of your ancestors had joined the Crusades; and supposing it to be only that of St. Louis, that makes you mount to the thirteenth century, which is tolerably ancient.

"As for you, viscount," continued Monte-Cristo to Morcerf, "you are more fortunate than the government, for your arms are really beautiful, and speak to the imagination. Yes, you are at once from Provence and Spain; that explains, if the portrait you showed me be like, the dark hue I so much admired on the visage of the noble Catalan."

In the most conspicuous part of the salon was another portrait. It was that of a man from five to eight and thirty, in the uniform of a general officer wearing the double epaulette *en torsade*, that indicates superior rank; the ribbon of the Legion of Honour round his neck, which showed he was a commander; and on the breast, on the right the star of a grand officer of the order of the Saviour, and on the left that of the grand cross of Charles III., which proved that the person represented by the picture had served in the wars of Greece and Spain, or, what was just the same thing as regarded decorations, had fulfilled some diplomatic mission in the two countries.

Monte-Cristo was engaged in examining this portrait with no less care than he had bestowed upon the other, when another door opened, and he found himself

opposite to the Count de Morcerf himself. He was a man of forty to forty-five years, but he seemed at least fifty, and his black moustache and eyebrows contrasted strangely with his almost white hair, which was cut short in the military fashion. He was dressed in plain clothes, and wore at his button-hole the ribbons of the different orders to which he belonged. This man entered with a tolerably dignified step, and with a species of haste. Monte-Cristo saw him advance towards him without making a single step. It seemed as if his feet were rooted to the ground, and his eyes on the Count de Morcerf.

"Father," said the young man, "I have the honour of presenting to you M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo, the generous friend whom I had the good fortune to meet in the critical juncture of which I have told you."

"You are most welcome, monsieur," said the Count de Morcerf, saluting Monte-Cristo with a smile; "and monsieur has rendered our house, in preserving its only heir, a service which ensures him our eternal gratitude."

As he said these words, the Count de Morcerf pointed to a chair, whilst he seated himself in another opposite the window.

Monte-Cristo, whilst he took the seat Morcerf offered him, placed himself in such a manner as to remain concealed in the shadow of the large velvet curtains, and read on the careworn and livid features of the count a whole history of secret griefs written in each wrinkle time had planted there.

"Madame la Comtesse," said Morcerf, "was at her toilet when she was informed of the visit she was about to receive. She would, however, be in the salon in ten minutes."

"It is a great honour for me," returned Monte-Cristo, "to be thus, on the first day of my arrival in Paris, brought in contact with a man whose merit equals his reputation, and to whom fortune has for once been

equitable; but has she not still on the plains of Mitidja, or in the mountains of Atlas, a marshal's staff to offer you?".

"Oh," replied Morcerf, reddening slightly, "I have left the service, monsieur. Made a peer at the Restoration, I served through the first campaign under the orders of Marshal Bourmont. I could, therefore, expect a higher rank, and who knows what might have happened had the elder branch remained on the throne? But the Revolution of July, was, it seems, sufficiently glorious to allow itself to be ungrateful; and it was so for all services that did not date from the imperial period. I tendered my resignation; for when you have gained your epaulets on the battlefield you do not know how to manœuvre on the slippery ground of the salons. I have hung up my sword, and cast myself into politics. I have devoted myself to industry; I study the useful arts. During the twenty years I served, I often wished to do so; but I had not the time."

"These are the ideas that render your nation superior to any other," returned Monte-Cristo. "A gentleman of high birth, possessor of an ample fortune, you have consented to gain your promotion as an obscure soldier, step by step—this is uncommon; then become general, peer of France, commander of the Legion of Honour, you consent to again commence a second apprenticeship, without any other hope or any other desire than that of one day becoming useful to your fellow-creatures; this, indeed, is praiseworthy—nay, more, it is sublime."

Albert looked on and listened with astonishment. He was not used to see Monte-Cristo give vent to such bursts of enthusiasm.

"Alas!" continued the stranger, doubtless to dispel the slight cloud that covered Morcerf's brow, "we do not act thus in Italy; we grow according to our race and our species, and we pursue the same lines, and often the same uselessness, all our lives."

"But, monsieur," said the Count de Morcerf, "for a

man of your merit, Italy is not a country, and France opens her arms to receive you; respond to her call. France will not, perhaps, be always ungrateful! She treats her children ill, but always welcomes strangers."

"Ah, father," said Albert, with a smile, "it is evident you do not know M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo; he despises all honours, and contents himself with those that are written on his passport."

"That is the most just remark," replied the stranger, "I ever heard made concerning myself!"

"You have been free to choose your career," observed the Count de Morcerf, with a sigh, "and you have chosen the path strewed with flowers."

"Precisely, monsieur," replied Monte-Cristo, with one of those smiles that a painter could never represent or a physiologist analyze.

"If I did not fear to fatigue you," said the general, evidently charmed with the count's manners, "I would have taken you to the Chamber; there is a debate very curious to those who are strangers to our modern senators."

"I shall be most grateful, monsieur, if you will, at some future time, renew your offer; but I have been flattered with the hope of being introduced to the countess, and I will therefore wait."

"Ah, here is my mother," cried the viscount.

Monte-Cristo turned round hastily, and saw Madame de Morcerf at the entrance of the salon, at the door opposite to that by which her husband had entered, pale and motionless. When Monte-Cristo turned round, she let fall her arm, which for some unknown reason had been resting on the gilded doorpost. She had been there some moments, and had overheard the last words of the visitor.

The latter rose and bowed to the countess, who inclined herself without speaking.

"Ah, good heavens, madame!" said the count, "are you unwell, or is it the heat of the room that affects you?"

"Are you ill, mother?" cried the viscount, springing towards her.

She thanked them both with a smile.

"No," returned she; "but I feel some emotion on seeing, for the first time, the man without whose intervention we should have been in tears and desolation. Monsieur," continued the countess, advancing with the majesty of a queen, "I owe to you the life of my son, and for this I bless you. Now I thank you for the pleasure you give me in thus affording me the opportunity of thanking you, as I have blessed you, from the bottom of my heart."

The count bowed again, but lower than before; he was even paler than Mercédès.

"Madame," said he, "M. le Comte and yourself recompense too generously a simple action. To save a man, to spare a father's feelings or a mother's sensibility, is not to do a good action, but a simple deed of humanity."

At these words, uttered with the most exquisite sweetness and politeness, Madame de Morcerf replied,—

"It is very fortunate for my son, monsieur, that he found such a friend, and I thank God that things are thus."

And Mercédès raised her fine eyes to heaven with so fervent an expression of gratitude that the count [illegible] he saw tears in them.

M. de Morcerf approached her.

"Madame," said he, "I have already made my excuses to M. le Comte for quitting him, and I pray you to do so also. The sitting commences at two; it is now three, and I am to speak."

"Go, then, and monsieur and I will strive our best to forget your absence!" replied the countess, with the same tone of deep feeling. "M. le Comte," continued she, turning to Monte-Cristo, "will you do us the honour of passing the rest of the day with us?"

"Believe me, madame, I feel most grateful for your

kindness, but I got out of my travelling carriage at your door this morning, and I am ignorant how I am installed in Paris, which I scarcely know. This is but a trifling inquietude, I know, but one that may be appreciated."

"We shall have this pleasure another time," said the countess; "you promise that?"

Monte-Cristo inclined himself without answering; but the gesture might pass for assent.

"I will not detain you, monsieur," continued the countess; "I would not have our gratitude become indiscreet or importunate."

"My dear count," said Albert, "I will endeavour to return your politeness at Rome, and place my coupé at your disposal until your own be ready."

"A thousand thanks for your kindness, viscount," returned the Count of Monte-Cristo; "but I suppose that M. Bertuccio has suitably employed the four hours and a half I have given him, and that I shall find a carriage of some sort ready at the door."

Monte-Cristo was not deceived. As soon as he appeared in the Count de Morcerf's antechamber, a footman, the same who at Rome had brought the count's card to the two young men and announced his visit, sprang into the vestibule; and when he arrived at the door, the illustrious traveller found his carriage awaiting him.

"Monsieur," said the count to Albert, "I do not ask you to accompany me to my house, as I can only show you a habitation fitted up in a hurry, and I have, as you know, a reputation to keep up as regards not being taken by surprise. Give me, therefore, one more day before I invite you; I shall then be certain not to fail in my hospitality."

"If you ask me for a day, count, I know what to anticipate; it will not be a house I shall see, but a palace. You have decidedly some *génie* at your control."

"*Ma foi!* spread that idea," replied the Count of Monte-Cristo, putting his foot on the velvet-lined steps

of his splendid carriage, "and that will be worth something to me among the ladies."

As he spoke he sprang into the vehicle, the door was closed, but not so rapidly to prevent Monte-Cristo from perceiving the almost imperceptible movement which stirred the curtains of the apartment in which he had left Madame de Morcerf.

CHAPTER XLII.

MONSIEUR BERTUCCIO.

DURING this time the count had arrived at his house. It had taken him six minutes to perform the distance; but these six minutes were sufficient to induce twenty young men, who knew the price of the equipage they had been unable to purchase themselves, to put their horses into a gallop in order to see the rich foreigner who could afford to give 20,000 francs apiece for his horses.

The house Ali had chosen, and which was to serve as a town residence to Monte-Cristo, was situated on the right hand as you ascended the Champs Elysées. This house, isolated from the rest, had, besides a main entrance, another in the Rue Ponthieu. Even before the coachman had hailed the concierge the massy gates rolled on their hinges; they had seen the count coming, and at Paris, as everywhere else, he was served with the rapidity of lightning. The carriage stopped at the left side of the portico; two men presented themselves at the carriage window. The one was Ali, who, smiling with an expression of the most sincere joy, seemed amply repaid by a mere look from Monte-Cristo. The other bowed respectfully and offered his arm to assist the count in descending.

"Thanks, Monsieur Bertuccio," said the count, spring-

ing lightly up the three steps of the portico; "and the notary?"

"He is in the small salon, excellency," returned Bertuccio.

"And the cards I ordered to have engraved as soon as you knew the number of the house?"

"M. le Comte, it is done already. I have been myself to the best engraver of the Palais Royal, who did the plate in my presence. The first card struck off was taken, according to your orders, to M. le Baron Danglars, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, No 7; the others are on the mantelpiece of your excellency's bedroom."

"Good. What o'clock is it?"

"Four o'clock."

Monte-Cristo gave his hat, cane, and gloves to the same French footman who had called his carriage at the Count de Morcerf's, and then he passed into the small salon, preceded by Bertuccio, who showed him the way.

"These are but indifferent marbles in this antechamber," said Monte-Cristo. "I trust all this will soon be taken away."

Bertuccio bowed. As the steward had said, the notary awaited him in the small salon. He was a simple-looking lawyer's clerk, elevated to the extraordinary dignity of a provincial scrivener.

"You are the notary empowered to sell the country house that I wish to purchase, monsieur?" asked Monte-Cristo.

"Yes, M. le Comte," returned the notary

"Is the deed of sale ready?"

"Yes, M. le Comte."

"Have you brought it?"

"Here it is."

"Very well; and where is this house that I purchase?" asked the count carelessly, addressing himself half to Bertuccio, half to the notary.

The steward made a gesture that signified, "I do not know."

The notary looked at the count with astonishment.

"What!" said he; "does not M. le Comte know where the house he purchased is situated?"

"No," returned the count.

"M. le Comte does not know it?"

"How should I know it? I have arrived from Cadiz this morning. I have never before been at Paris; and it is the first time I have ever even set my foot in France."

"Ah, that is different. The house you purchase is situated at Auteuil."

At these words Bertuccio turned pale.

"And where is Auteuil?" asked the count.

"Close here, monsieur," replied the notary, "a little beyond Passy; a charming situation, in the heart of the Bois de Boulogne."

"So near as that?" said the count; "but that is not in the country. What made you choose a house at the gates of Paris, Monsieur Bertuccio?"

"I!" cried the steward, with a strange expression. "M. le Comte did not charge me to purchase this house. If M. le Comte will recollect—if he will think——"

"Ah, true," observed Monte-Cristo; "I recollect now. I read the advertisement in one of the papers, and was tempted by the false title 'a country house.'"

"It is not yet too late," cried Bertuccio eagerly; "and if your excellency will intrust me with the commission, I will find you a better at Enghein, at Fontenay-aux-Roses, or at Bellevue."

"Oh, no," returned Monte-Cristo negligently; "since I have this, I will keep it."

"And you are quite right," said the notary, who feared to lose his fee. "It is a charming place, well supplied with spring water and fine trees; a comfortable habitation, although abandoned for a long time, without reckoning the furniture, which, although old, is yet valuable, now that old things are so much sought after; I suppose M. le Comte has the tastes of the day?"

"To be sure," returned Monte-Cristo; "it is very convenient, then?"

"It is more—it is magnificent."

"*Peste!* let us not lose such an opportunity," returned Monte-Cristo. "The deed, if you please, M. le Notaire." And he signed it rapidly, after having first ran his eye over that part of the deed in which were specified the situation of the house and the names of the proprietors.

"Bertuccio," said he, "give 55,000 francs to monsieur."

The steward left the room with a faltering step, and returned with a bundle of bank-notes, which the notary counted like a man who never gives a receipt for money until after legal examination.

"And now," demanded the count, "are all the forms complied with?"

"All, M. le Comte."

"Have you the keys?"

"They are in the hands of the concierge who takes care of the house; but here is the order I have given him to instal Monsieur le Comte in his new possession."

"Very well;" and Monte-Cristo made a sign with his hand to the notary, which said, "I have no further need of you; you may go."

"But," observed the honest notary, "you are mistaken, I think, M. le Comte; it is only 50,000 francs, everything included."

"And your fee?"

"Is included in this sum."

"But have you not come from Auteuil here?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, then, it is but fair that you should be paid for your loss of time and trouble," said the count; and he made a gesture of polite dismissal.

The notary left the room backwards, and bowing down to the ground; it was the first time he had ever met a similar client.

"See this gentleman out," said the count to Bertuccio.

And the steward followed the notary out of the room.

Scarcely was the count alone when he drew from his pocket a book closed with a lock, and opened it with a key which he wore round his neck, and which never left him. After having sought for a few minutes, he stopped at a leaf which had several notes, and compared them with the deed of sale which lay on the table, and recalling his *souvenirs*,—

"'Auteuil, Rue de la Fontaine, No 28;' it is indeed the same," said he. "And now am I to rely upon an avowal extorted by religious or physical terror? However, in an hour I shall know all."

"Bertuccio!" cried he, striking a light hammer with a pliant handle on a small gong. "Bertuccio!"

The steward appeared at the door.

"Monsieur Bertuccio," said the count, "did you never tell me that you had travelled in France?"

"In some parts of France—yes, excellency."

"You know the environs of Paris, then?"

"No, excellency, no," returned the steward, with a sort of nervous trembling, which Monte-Cristo, a connoisseur in all emotions, rightly attributed to great disquietude.

"It is unfortunate," returned he, "that you have never visited the environs, for I wish to see my new property this evening, and had you gone with me, you could have given me some useful information."

"To Auteuil!" cried Bertuccio, whose copper complexion became livid. "I go to Auteuil!"

"Well, what is there surprising in that? When I live at Auteuil, you must come there, as you belong to my service."

Bertuccio hung down his head before the imperious look of his master, and remained motionless, without making any answer.

"Why, what has happened to you? Are you going

to make me ring a second time for the carriage?" asked Monte-Cristo, in the same tone that Louis XIV. pronounced the famous, "I have been almost obliged to wait."

Bertuccio made but one bound to the antechamber, and cried in a hoarse voice,—

"His excellency's horses!"

Monte-Cristo wrote two or three notes, and as he sealed the last, the steward appeared.

"Your excellency's carriage is at the door," said he.

"Well, take your hat and gloves," returned Monte-Cristo.

"Am I to accompany you, M. le Comte?" cried Bertuccio.

"Certainly, you must give your orders, for I intend residing at the house."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE HOUSE AT AUTEUIL.

Monte-Cristo had remarked that, as they descended the staircase, Bertuccio signed himself in the Corsican manner—that is, had formed the sign of the cross in the air with his thumb, and as he seated himself in the carriage muttered a short prayer.

Any one but a curious man would have had pity on seeing the steward's extraordinary repugnance for the count's projected drive *extra muros*; but it seemed the count was too curious to excuse Bertuccio this little journey. In twenty minutes they were at Auteuil; the steward's emotion had continued to augment as they entered the village. Bertuccio, crouched in a corner of the carriage, began to examine with a feverish anxiety every house they passed.

"Tell them to stop at Rue de la Fontaine, No. 28."

said the count, fixing his eyes on the steward, to whom he gave this order.

Bertuccio's forehead was covered with perspiration; but, however, he obeyed, and, leaning out of the window, he cried to the coachman,—

"Rue de la Fontaine, No. 28."

No. 28 was situated at the extremity of the village. During the drive night had set in, or rather a black cloud, charged with electricity, gave to these vapours the appearance and solemnity of a dramatic episode. The carriage stopped; the footman sprang off the box and opened the door.

"Well," said the count, "you do not get out, M. Bertuccio. You are going to stay in the carriage, then? What are you thinking of this evening?"

Bertuccio sprang out, and offered his shoulder to the count, who, this time, leaned upon it as he descended the three steps of the carriage.

"Knock," said the count, "and announce me."

Bertuccio knocked, the door opened, and the concierge appeared.

"What is it?" asked he.

"It is your new master, my good fellow," said the footman. And he held out to the concierge the notary's order.

"The house is sold, then?" demanded the concierge; "and this gentleman is coming to live here?"

"Yes, my friend," returned the Count; "and I will try to give you no cause to regret your old master."

"Oh, monsieur," said the concierge, "I shall not have much cause to regret him, for he came here but seldom. It is five years since he was here last, and he did well to sell the house, for it did not bring him in anything at all."

"What was the name of your old master?" said Monte-Cristo.

"M. le Marquis de Saint-Méran. Ah, I am sure he has not sold the house for what he gave for it."

"The Marquis de Saint-Méran!" returned the count. "The name is not unknown to me; the Marquis de Saint-Méran!" and he appeared to meditate.

"An old gentleman," continued the concierge, "a stanch follower of the Bourbons. He had an only daughter, who married M. de Villefort, who had been the procureur du roi at Nîmes, and afterwards at Versailles."

Monte-Cristo glanced at Bertuccio, who became whiter than the wall against which he leaned to prevent himself from falling.

"And is not this daughter dead?" demanded Monte-Cristo; "I fancy I have heard so."

"Yes, monsieur, one-and-twenty years ago; and since then we have not seen the poor marquis three times."

"Thanks, thanks," said Monte-Cristo, judging from the steward's utter prostration that he could not stretch the cord farther without danger of breaking it. "Give me a light."

"Shall I accompany you, monsieur?"

"No, it is unnecessary; Bertuccio will show me a light." And Monte-Cristo accompanied these words by the gift of two pieces of gold, which produced a torrent of thanks and blessings from the concierge.

"Ah, monsieur," said he, after having vainly searched on the mantelpiece and the shelves, "I have not got any candles."

"Take one of the carriage lamps, Bertuccio," said the count, "and show me the apartments."

The steward obeyed in silence; but it was easy to see, from the manner in which the hand that held the light trembled, how much it cost him to obey.

They went over a tolerably large ground floor, a first-floor consisting of a salon, a bath-room, and two bed-rooms. By one of these rooms they arrived at a winding staircase that opened on to the garden.

"Ah, here is a private staircase," said the count; "that is convenient. Light me, M. Bertuccio, and go first; we will see where it leads to."

"Monsieur," replied Bertuccio, "it leads to the garden."

"And, pray, how do you know that?"

"It ought to do so, at least."

"Well, let us be sure of that."

Bertuccio sighed, and went on first. The stairs led in reality to the garden. At the outer door the steward paused.

"Go on, Monsieur Bertuccio," said the count.

But he to whom he spoke was stupefied, bewildered, stunned. His haggard eyes glanced around, as if in search of the traces of some terrible event, and with his clenched hands he seemed striving to shut out some horrible recollections.

"Well!" insisted the count.

"No, no," cried Bertuccio, setting down the lantern at the angle of the interior wall. "No, monsieur, it is impossible; I can go no farther."

"What does this mean?" demanded the irresistible voice of Monte-Cristo.

"Why, you must see, M. le Comte," cried the steward, "that this is not natural; that, having a house to purchase, you purchase it exactly at Auteuil, and that, purchasing it at Auteuil, this house should be No. 28 Rue de la Fontaine. Oh, why did I not tell you all? I am sure you would not have forced me to come. I hoped your house would have been some other one than this; as if there was not another house at Auteuil than that of the assassination!"

"Ah, ah!" cried Monte-Cristo, stopping suddenly, "what words did you utter? Devil of a man, Corsican that you are—always mysteries or superstitions. Come, take the lantern, and let us visit the garden. You are not afraid of ghosts with me, I hope?"

Bertuccio raised the lantern, and obeyed. The door, as it opened, disclosed a gloomy sky, in which the moon strove vainly to struggle through a sea of clouds that covered her with their sombre wave, that she illumined

for an instant, and was then lost in the darkness. The steward wished to turn to the left.

"No, no, monsieur," said Monte-Cristo. "What is the use of following the alleys? Here is a beautiful lawn; let us go straight on."

Bertuccio wiped the perspiration from his brow, but obeyed; however, he continued to take the left hand. Monte-Cristo, on the contrary, took the right hand; arrived near a clump of trees, he stopped. The steward could not restrain himself.

"Move, monsieur—move away, I entreat you; you are exactly at the spot!"

"What spot?"

"Where he fell."

"My dear Monsieur Bertuccio," said Monte-Cristo, laughing, "recover yourself; we are no longer at Sartène or at Corte. This is not a *mâquis*, but an English garden; badly kept, I own, but still you must not calumniate it for that."

"Monsieur, I implore you do not stay there?"

"I think you are going mad, Bertuccio," said the count coldly. "If that is the case, I warn you I shall have you put in a lunatic asylum."

"Alas, excellency," returned Bertuccio, joining his hands and shaking his head in a manner that would have excited the count's laughter, had not thoughts of a superior interest occupied him and rendered him attentive to the least revelation of this timorous conscience. "Alas, excellency, the evil has arrived!"

"M. Bertuccio," said the count, "I am very glad to tell you that whilst you gesticulate, you wring your hands and roll your eyes like a man possessed by a devil who will not leave him; and I have always remarked that the devil most obstinate to be expelled is a secret. I knew you were a Corsican; I knew you were gloomy, and always brooding over some old history of the vendetta; and I overlooked that in Italy, because in Italy those things are thought nothing of. But in France they are con-

sidered in very bad taste; there are gendarmes who occupy themselves with such affairs, judges who condemn, and scaffolds which avenge."

Bertuccio clasped his hands, and as, in all these evolutions, he did not let fall the lantern, the light showed his pale and altered countenance. Monte-Cristo examined him with the same look that at Rome had viewed the execution of Andrea, and then, in a tone that made a shudder pass through the veins of the poor steward,—

"The Abbé Busoni, then, told me an untruth," said he, "when, after his journey in France in 1829, he sent you to me with a letter of recommendation, in which he enumerated all your valuable qualities. Well, I shall write to the abbé; I shall render him responsible for his protégé's misconduct, and I shall soon know all about this assassination. Only I warn you that, when I reside in a country, I conform to all its code, and I have no wish to put myself within the compass of the French laws for your sake."

"Oh, do not do that, excellency. I have always served you faithfully," cried Bertuccio in despair. "I have always been an honest man, and, as far as lay in my power, I have done good."

"I do not deny it," returned the count; "but why are you thus agitated? It is a bad sign; a quiet conscience does not occasion such paleness in the cheeks, and such fear in the hands of a man."

"But, M. le Comte," replied Bertuccio hesitatingly, "did not M. l'Abbé Busoni, who heard my confession in the prison at Nîmes, tell you I had a heavy reproach to make against myself?"

"Yes; but as he said you would make an excellent steward, I concluded you had stolen—that was all."

"Oh, Monsieur le Comte!" returned Bertuccio contemptuously.

"Or, as you are a Corsican, that you had been unable to resist the desire of making a *peau*, as you call it."

"Yes, my good master," cried Bertuccio, casting himself at the count's feet, "it was simply a vengeance—nothing else."

"I understand that; but I do not understand what it is that galvanizes you in this manner."

"But, monsieur, it is very natural," returned Bertuccio, "since it was in this house that my vengeance was accomplished."

"What! my house?"

"Oh, M. le Comte, it was not yours, then."

"Whose, then? M. le Marquis de Saint-Méran, I think, the concierge said. What had you to revenge on the Marquis de Saint-Méran?"

"Oh, it was not on him, monsieur; it was on another."

"This is strange," returned Monte-Cristo, seeming to yield to his reflections, "that you should find yourself without any preparation in a house where the event happened that causes you so much remorse."

"Monsieur," said the steward, "it is fatality, I am sure. First, you purchase a house at Auteuil: this house is the one where I have committed an assassination; you descend to the garden by the same staircase by which he descended; you stop at the spot where he received the blow; and two paces farther is the grave in which he had just buried his child. This is not chance; for chance, in this case, resembles Providence too much."

"Well, M. le Corse, let us suppose it is Providence. I always suppose anything people please; and, besides, you must concede something to diseased minds. Come, collect yourself, and tell me all."

"I have never related it but once, and that was to the Abbé Busoni. Such things," continued Bertuccio, shaking his head, "are only related under the seal of confession."

"Then," said the count, "I refer you to your confessor. Turn Chartreux or Trappist, and relate your secrets; but as for me, I do not like any one who is alarmed by such phantasms, and I do not choose that

my servants should be afraid to walk in the garden of an evening. I confess I am not very desirous of a visit from the commissaire de police; for in Italy justice is only paid when silent, in France she is paid only when she speaks. *Peste!* I thought you somewhat Corsican, a great deal smuggler, and an excellent steward; but I see you have other strings to your bow. You are no longer in my service, Monsieur Bertuccio."

"Oh, M. le Comte, M. le Comte!" cried the steward, struck with terror at this threat, "if that is the only reason I cannot remain in your service, I will tell all; for if I quit you, it will only be to go to the scaffold."

"That is different," replied Monte-Cristo; "but if you intend to tell an untruth, reflect it were better not to speak at all."

"No, monsieur, I swear to you, by my hopes of salvation, I will tell you all, for the Abbé Busoni himself only knew a part of my secret; but, I pray you, go away from that plane-tree: the moon is just bursting through the clouds, and there, standing where you do, and wrapped in that cloak that conceals your figure, you remind me of M. de Villefort.'

"What!" cried Monte-Cristo, "it was M. de Villefort?"

"Your excellency knows him?"

"The former procureur du roi at Nîmes?"

"Yes."

"Who married the Count de Saint-Méran's daughter?"

"Yes."

"Who enjoyed the reputation of being the most severe, the most upright, the most rigid magistrate on the bench?"

"Well, monsieur," said Bertuccio, "this man with this spotless reputation——"

"Well?"

"Was a villain."

"Bah!" replied Monte-Cristo; "impossible!"

"It is as I tell you."

"Ah, really," said Monte-Cristo. "Have you the proof of this?"

"I had it."

"And you have lost it. How stupid!"

"Yes; but by careful search it might be recovered."

"Really," returned the count. "Relate it to me, for it begins to interest me."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE VENDETTA.

"The story begins in 1815."

"Ah," said Monte-Cristo, "1815 is not yesterday."

"No, monsieur; and yet I recollect all things as clearly as if they had happened but then. I had a brother, an elder brother, who was in the service of the emperor. He had become lieutenant in a regiment composed entirely of Corsicans. This brother was my only friend; we became orphans, I at five, he at eighteen. He brought me up as if I had been his son; and in 1814 he married. When the emperor returned from the island of Elba, my brother instantly joined the army, was slightly wounded at Waterloo, and retired with the army behind the Loire."

"But that is the history of the Hundred Days, M. Bertuccio," said the count; "unless I am mistaken, it has been already written."

"Excuse me, excellency, but these details are necessary; and you promised to be patient."

"Go on; I will keep my word."

"One day we received a letter. I should tell you that we lived in the little village of Rogliano, at the extremity of Cape Corse. This letter was from my brother. He told us that the army was disbanded, and that he should return by Châteauroux, Clermont-Ferrand, Le Puy, and

Nîmes; and if I had any money, he prayed me to leave it for him at Nîmes with an aubergiste with whom I had dealings."

"In the smuggling line?" said Monte-Cristo.

"Eh, M. le Comte, every one must live."

"Certainly; continue."

"I loved my brother tenderly, as I told your excellency, and I resolved not to send the money, but to take it to him myself. I possessed a thousand francs (£40). I left five hundred with Assunta, my sister-in-law, and with the other five hundred I set off for Nîmes. It was easy to do so; and as I had my boat and a lading to take in at sea, everything favoured my project.

"But, after we had taken in our cargo, the wind became contrary, so that we were four or five days without being able to enter the Rhone. At last, however, we succeeded, and worked up to Arles. I left the boat between Bellegarde and Beaucaire, and took the road to Nîmes."

"We are getting to the story now?"

"Yes, your excellency. Excuse me, but, as you will see, I only tell you what is absolutely necessary. Just at this time the famous massacres of the south of France took place. Two or three brigands called Trestaillon, Truphemy, and Graffan, publicly assassinated everybody whom they suspected of Bonapartism. You have doubtless heard of these massacres, M. le Comte?"

"Vaguely; I was far from France at that period. Go on."

"As I entered Nîmes, I literally waded in blood; at every step you encountered dead bodies and bands of the murderers, who killed, plundered, and burned. At the sight of this slaughter and devastation I became terrified, not for myself—for I, a simple Corsican fisherman, had nothing to fear; on the contrary, that time was most favourable for us smugglers—but for my brother, a soldier of the empire, returning from the army

of the Loire, with his uniform and his epaulets, there was everything to apprehend.

"I hastened to the aubergiste. My presages had been but too true: my brother had arrived the previous evening at Nîmes, and, at the very door of the house where he was about to demand hospitality, he had been assassinated.

"I did all in my power to discover the murderers, but no one durst tell me their names, so much were they dreaded. I then thought of that French justice of which I had heard so much, and which feared nothing, and I went to the procureur du roi."

"And this procureur du roi was named Villefort?" asked Monte-Cristo carelessly.

"Yes, your excellency; he came from Marseilles, where he had been deputy procureur. His zeal had procured him advancement, and he was said to be one of the first who had informed the government of the departure from the island of Elba."

"Then," said Monte-Cristo, "you went to him?"

"'Monsieur,' I said, 'my brother was assassinated yesterday in the streets of Nîmes, I know not by whom, but it is your duty to find out. You are the head of justice here; and it is for justice to avenge those she has been unable to protect.'

"'Who was your brother?' asked he.

"'A lieutenant in the Corsican battalion.'

"'A soldier of the usurper, then?'

"'A soldier of the French army.'

"'Well,' replied he, 'he has smitten with the sword, and has perished by the sword.'

"'You are mistaken, monsieur,' I replied; 'he has perished by the poniard.'

"'What do you want me to do?' asked the magistrate.

"'I have already told you: avenge him.'

"'On whom?'

"'On his murderers.'

"'How should I know who they are?'

"'Order them to be sought for.'

"'Why, your brother has been involved in a quarrel, and killed in a duel. All these old soldiers commit excesses which were tolerated in the time of the emperor, but which are not suffered now; for the people here do not like soldiers of such disorderly conduct.'

"'Monsieur,' I replied, 'it is not for myself that I entreat your interference—I should grieve for him or avenge him; but my poor brother had a wife, and were anything to happen to me, the poor creature would perish from want, for my brother's pay alone kept her. Pray, try and obtain a small government pension for her.'

"'Every revolution has its catastrophes,' returned M. de Villefort; 'your brother has been the victim of this. It is a misfortune, and government owes nothing to his family. What has happened is quite natural, and is only the law of reprisals.'

"'What!' cried I, 'do you, a magistrate, speak thus to me?'

"'All these Corsicans are mad, on my honour,' replied M. de Villefort; 'they fancy that their countryman is still emperor. You have mistaken the time: you should have told me this two months ago; it is too late now. Depart instantly, or I will compel you to do so.'

"I looked at him an instant to see if, by renewed entreaties, there was anything to hope for.

"But this man was of stone. I approached him, and said in a low voice,—

"'Well, since you know the Corsicans so well, you know that they always keep their word. You think that it was a good deed to kill my brother, who was a Bonapartist, because you are a royalist? Well, I, who am a Bonapartist also, declare one thing to you, which is, that I will kill you. From this moment I declare the vendetta against you; so protect yourself

as well as you can, for the next time we meet your last hour has come.'

"And before he had recovered from his surprise, I opened the door and left the room."

"Ah, ah!" said Monte-Cristo, "with your innocent appearance you do those things, M. Bertuccio; and to a procureur du roi! Moreover, did he know what was meant by this terrible word 'vendetta'?"

"He knew so well that from that moment he shut himself in his house, and never went out unattended, seeking me high and low. Fortunately I was so well concealed that he could not find me.

"Then he became alarmed, and dared not reside any longer at Nîmes; so he solicited a change of residence, and as he was in reality very influential, he was nominated to Versailles. But, as you know, a Corsican who has sworn to avenge himself cares not for distance; so his carriage, fast as it went, was never above half a day's journey before me, who followed him on foot.

"The most important thing was, not to kill him only—for I had an opportunity of doing so a hundred times—but to kill him without being discovered, at seast without being arrested.

"I no longer belonged to myself, for I had my sister-in-law to protect and provide for. During three months I watched M. de Villefort; for three months he took not a step out of doors without my following him. At length I discovered that he went mysteriously to Auteuil. I followed him thither, and I saw him enter the house where we now are; only, instead of entering by the great door that looks into the street, he came on horseback or in his carriage, left the one or the other at the little inn, and entered by the gate you see there."

Monte-Cristo made a sign with his head that he could discern amid the darkness the door to which Bertuccio alluded.

"As I had nothing more to do at Versailles, I went

to Auteuil, and gained all the information I could. If I wished to surprise him, it was evident this was the spot to lie in wait for him. The house belonged, as the concierge informed your excellency, to M. de Saint-Méran, Villefort's father-in-law. M. de Saint-Méran lived at Marseilles, so that this country house was useless to him, and it was reported to be let to a young widow, known only by the name of the baroness.

"One evening, as I was looking over the wall, I saw a young and handsome woman, who was walking alone in that garden, which was not overlooked by any windows, and I guessed that she was awaiting M. de Villefort. When she was sufficiently near to distinguish her features, I saw she was from eighteen to nineteen, tall and very fair. As she had a loose muslin dress on, and as nothing concealed her figure, I saw she would ere long become a mother. A few moments after, the little door was opened, and a man entered. The young female hastened to meet him. They threw themselves into each other's arms, embraced tenderly, and returned together to the house. This man was M. de Villefort. I fully believed that when he went out in the night he would be forced to traverse the whole of the garden alone."

"And," asked the count, "did you ever know the name of this woman?"

"No, excellency," returned Bertuccio; "you will see I had not time to learn it."

"Go on."

"That evening," continued Bertuccio, "I could have killed the procureur du roi; but as I was not sufficiently master of the localities, I was fearful of not killing him on the spot, and that, should his cries give the alarm, I could not escape. I put it off until the next occasion; and in order that nothing should escape me, I took the chamber looking into the street along which ran the wall of the garden.

"Three days after, about seven o'clock in the evening,

I saw a servant on horseback leave the house at full gallop, and take the road that leads to Sèvres. I conjectured he was going to Versailles, and I was not deceived. Three hours after, the man returned covered with dust: his errand was performed. Ten minutes after, another man on foot, muffled in a mantle, opened the little door of the garden, which he closed after him. I descended rapidly; although I had not seen Villefort's face, I recognized him by the beating of my heart. I crossed the street, and stopped at a post placed at the angle of the wall, and by means of which I had once before looked into the garden. This time I did not content myself with looking, but I took my knife out of my pocket, felt that the point was sharp, and sprang over the wall. My first care was to run to the door; he had left the key in it, taking the simple precaution of turning it twice in the lock.

"It was the end of September; the wind blew violently. The faint glimpses of the pale moon, hidden at every instant by the masses of dark clouds that were sweeping across the sky, whitened the gravelled walks that led to the house, but were unable to pierce the obscurity of the thick shubberies, in which a man could conceal himself without any fear of discovery. I hid myself in the one nearest to the path Villefort must take; and scarcely was I there than, amidst the gusts of wind, I fancied I heard groans. But you know, or rather you do not know, M. le Comte, that he who is about to commit an assassination fancies he hears low cries perpetually ringing in his ears. Two hours passed thus, during which I imagined I heard these moans repeated. Midnight struck. As the last stroke died away, I saw a faint light shine through the windows of the private staircase by which we have just descended. The door opened, and the man in the mantle reappeared. The terrible moment had come; but I had so long been prepared for it that my heart did not fail in the least. I drew my knife from my pocket again, opened it, and

prepared myself to strike. The man in the mantle advanced towards me, but as he drew near I saw he had a weapon in his hand. I was afraid, not of a struggle, but of a failure. When he was only a few paces from me, I saw that what I had taken for a weapon was only a spade. I was still unable to divine for what reason M. de Villefort had this spade in his hands, when he stopped close to the clump, glanced round, and began to dig a hole in the earth. I then perceived that he hid something beneath his mantle, which he laid on the grass in order to dig more freely. Then, I confess, curiosity became mixed with my hatred; I wished to see what Villefort was going to do there, and I remained motionless and holding my breath. Then an idea crossed my mind, which was confirmed when I saw the procureur du roi lift from under his mantle a box two feet long, and six or eight inches deep. I let him place the box in the hole he had made; then, whilst he stamped with his feet to remove all traces of his occupation, I rushed on him and plunged my knife into his breast, exclaiming,—

"'I am Giovanni Bertuccio. Thy death for my brother's; thy treasure for his widow. Thou seest that my vengeance is more complete than I had hoped.'

"I know not if he heard these words; I think he did not, for he fell without a cry. I felt his blood gush over my face; but I was intoxicated, I was delirious, and the blood refreshed instead of burning me. In a second I had disinterred the box; then, that it might not be known I had done so, filled up the hole, threw the spade over the wall, and rushing through the door, which I double-locked, carrying off the key."

"Ah," said Monte-Cristo, "it seems to me this was only a murder and robbery."

"No, your excellency," returned Bertuccio; "it was a vendetta followed by a restitution."

"And was the sum a large one?"

"It was not money."

"Ah, I recollect," replied the count. "Did you not say something of an infant?"

"Yes, excellency. I hastened to the river, sat down on the bank, and with my knife forced open the lock of the box. In a fine linen cloth was wrapped a new-born child. Its purple visage and its violet-coloured hands showed it had perished from suffocation; but as it was not yet cold, I hesitated to throw it into the water that ran at my feet. In reality, at the end of an instant I fancied I felt a slight pulsation of the heart; and as I had been assistant at the hospital at Bastia, I did what a doctor would have done—I inflated the lungs by blowing air into them, and at the expiration of a quarter of an hour I saw the breathing commence, and a feeble cry was heard. In my turn I uttered a cry, but a cry of joy. 'God has not cursed me then,' I cried, 'since He permits me to save the life of a human creature, in exchange for the life I have taken away!'"

"And what did you do with the child?" asked Monte-Cristo. "It was an embarrassing load for a man seeking to escape."

"I had not for a moment the idea of keeping it, but knew that at Paris there was a hospital where they receive these poor creatures. As I passed the barrier, I declared I had found this child on the road, and inquired where the hospital was. The box confirmed my statement; the linen proved it belonged to wealthy parents; the blood with which I was covered might have proceeded from the child as well as from any one else. No objection was raised, but they pointed out to me the hospital, which was situated at the upper end of the Rue d'Enfer; and after having taken the precaution of cutting the linen in two pieces, so that one of the two letters which marked it was wrapped round the child, whilst the other remained in my possession, I rang the bell, and fled with all speed. A fortnight after I was at Rogliano, and I said to Assunta,—

"'Console thyself, sister; Israel is dead, but he is avenged.'"

"She demanded what I meant, and when I had recounted all to her,—

"'Giovanni,' said Assunta, 'you should have brought this child with you. We would have replaced the parents it has lost, have called it Benedetto, and then, in consequence of this good action, God would have blessed us.'

"In reply I gave her the half of the linen I had kept in order to reclaim him if we became rich."

"What letters were marked on the linen?" said Monte-Cristo.

"An H and an N, surmounted by a baron's coronet."

"By Heaven, M. Bertuccio, you make use of heraldic terms! Where did you study heraldry?"

"In your service, excellency, where everything is learned."

"Go on; I am curious to know two things."

"What are they, monseigneur?"

"What became of this little boy? for I think you told me it was a boy, Monsieur Bertuccio."

"No, excellency, I do not recollect telling you that."

"I thought you did; I must have been mistaken."

"No, you were not, for it was in reality a little boy. But your excellency wished to know two things; what was the second?"

"The second was the crime of which you were accused when you asked for a confessor, and the Abbé Busoni came to visit you at your request in the prison at Nîmes."

"The story will be very long, excellency."

"What matter? You know I take but little sleep, and I do not suppose you are very much inclined for it either."

Bertuccio bowed, and resumed his story.

"Partly to drown the recollections of the past that haunted me, partly to supply the wants of the poor widow, I eagerly returned to my trade of smuggler, which had become more easy since that relaxation of the laws which always follows a revolution. The southern

districts were ill watched in particular, in consequence of the disturbances that were perpetually breaking out in Avignon, Nîmes, or Uzés. We profited by the kind of respite government gave us to make friends everywhere. Since my brother's assassination in the streets of Nîmes I had never entered the town; the result was, the aubergiste with whom we were connected, seeing we would no longer come to him, was forced to come to us, and had established a branch to his inn, on the road from Bellegarde to Beaucaire, at the sign of the Pont du Gard. We had thus, both on the side of Aigues-Mortes, Martigues, or at Bouc, a dozen places where we left our goods, and where, in case of necessity, we concealed ourselves from the gendarmes and custom-house officers. Smuggling is a profitable trade when a certain degree of vigour and intelligence is employed.

"My journeys became more and more extensive and more productive. Assunta took care of all, and our little fortune increased. One day that I was setting off on an expedition, 'Go,' said she; 'at your return I will give you a surprise.' I questioned her, but in vain; she would tell me nothing, and I departed.

"Our expedition lasted nearly six weeks. We had been to Lucca to take in oil, to Leghorn for English cottons; and we ran our cargo without opposition, and returned home full of joy.

"When I entered the house, the first thing I beheld in the centre of Assunta's chamber was a cradle that might be called sumptuous compared with the rest of the furniture, and in it a baby of seven or eight months old. I uttered a cry of joy. The only moments of sadness I had known since the assassination of the procureur du roi were caused by the recollection that I had abandoned this child. For the assassination itself I had never felt any remorse.

"Poor Assunta had guessed all. She had profited by my absence, and, furnished with the half of the linen, and having written down the day and hour at which I

had deposited the child at the hospital, had set off for Paris, and had reclaimed it. No objection was raised, and the infant was given up to her. Ah, I confess, M. le Comte, when I saw this poor creature sleeping peacefully in its cradle, I felt my eyes filled with tears.

"'Ah, Assunta,' cried I, 'you are an excellent woman, and Heaven will bless you.'"

"This," said Monte-Cristo, "is less correct than your philosophy; it is only faith."

"Alas! your excellency is right," replied Bertuccio, "and God made this infant the instrument of our punishment. Never did a perverse nature declare itself more prematurely; and yet it was not owing to any fault in his bringing up. He was a most lovely child, with large blue eyes, of that deep colour that harmonizes so well with the general fairness of the complexion; only his hair, which was too light, gave his face a most singular expression, which redoubled the vivacity of his look and the malice of his smile. Unfortunately there is a proverb which says that 'red is either altogether good or altogether bad.' The proverb was but too correct as regarded Benedetto, and even in his infancy he manifested the worst disposition. It is true that the indulgence of his mother encouraged him. This child, for whom my poor sister would go to the town, five or six leagues off, to purchase the earliest fruits and the most tempting sweetmeats, preferred to the grapes of Palma, or the preserves of Genoa, the chestnuts stolen from a neighbour's orchard, or the dried apples in his loft, when he could eat as well of the nuts and apples that grew in my garden.

"One day, when Benedetto was about five or six, our neighbour, Wasilio, who, according to the custom of the country, never locked up his purse or his valuables—for, as your excellency knows, there are no thieves in Corsica—complained that he had lost a louis out of his purse. We thought he must have made a mistake in counting his money, but he persisted in the accuracy of

his statement. One day, Benedetto, who had quitted the house since the morning, to our great anxiety did not return until late in the evening, dragging a monkey after him, which he said he had found chained to the foot of a tree. For more than a month past, the mischievous child, who knew not what to wish for, had taken it into his head to have a monkey. A boatman who had passed by Rogliano, and who had several of these animals, whose tricks had greatly diverted him, had doubtless suggested this idea to him.

"'Monkeys are not found in our woods chained to trees,' said I; 'confess how you obtained this animal.'

"Benedetto maintained the truth of what he had said, and accompanied it with details that did more honour to his imagination than to his veracity. I became angry; he began to laugh: I threatened to strike him, and he made two steps backwards.

"'You cannot beat me,' said he; 'you have no right, for you are not my father.'

"We never knew who had revealed this fatal secret, which we had so carefully concealed from him. However, it was this answer, in which the child's whole character revealed itself, that almost terrified me, and my arm fell without touching him. The boy triumphed, and this victory rendered him so audacious that all the money of Assunta, whose affection for him seemed to increase as he became more unworthy of it, was spent in caprices she knew not how to contend against, and follies she had not the courage to prevent. When I was at Rogliano everything went on properly, but no sooner was my back turned than Benedetto became master, and everything went ill. When he was only eleven, he chose his companions from among the young men of eighteen or twenty, the worst characters in Bastia, or, indeed, in Corsica; and they had already, for some pieces of mischief, been several times threatened with a prosecution.

"I became alarmed, as any prosecution might be

attended with serious consequences. I was compelled, at this period, to leave Corsica on an important expedition. I reflected for a long time, and, with the hope of averting some impending misfortune, I resolved that Benedetto should accompany me. I hoped that the active and laborious life of a smuggler, with the severe discipline on board, would have a salutary effect on his character, well-nigh if not quite corrupted.

"I spoke to Benedetto alone, and proposed to him to accompany me, endeavouring to tempt him by all the promises most likely to dazzle the imagination of a child of twelve years old.

"He heard me patiently, and, when I had finished, burst out laughing.

"'Are you mad, uncle?' (he called me by this name when he was in a good humour). 'Do you think I am going to change the life I lead for your mode of existence; my agreeable indolence for the hard and precarious toil you impose on yourself? Why, I have as much money as I want; mother Assunta always furnishes me when I ask for it. You see that I should be a fool to accept your offer.'

"The arguments, and this audacity, perfectly stupefied me. Benedetto rejoined his associates, and I saw him from a distance point me out to them as a fool."

"Sweet child!" murmured Monte-Cristo.

"My mind was already made up. Benedetto could read, write, and cipher perfectly; for, when the fit seized him, he learned more in a day than others in a week. My intention was to enter him as clerk in some ship, and, without letting him know anything of my plan, to convey him some morning on board. By this means his future treatment would depend upon his own conduct.

"I set off for France after having fixed upon this plan.

"All our cargo was to be landed in the Gulf of Lyons; and this plan was the more difficult, since we were in 1829. The most perfect tranquillity was restored, and

the vigilance of the custom-house officers was redoubled; and this strictness was increased at this time in consequence of the fair of Beaucaire.

"Our expedition began favourably. We anchored our bark, which had a double hold, where our goods were concealed, amidst a number of other vessels that bordered the banks of the Rhone from Beaucaire to Arles. On our arrival there we began to discharge our cargo in the night, and to convey it into the town by the help of the aubergistes with whom we were connected. Whether success rendered us imprudent, or whether we were betrayed, I know not; but one evening, about five o'clock, our little cabin-boy hastened, breathless, to inform us that he had seen a detachment of custom-house officers advancing in our direction. It was not their vicinity that alarmed us, for detachments were constantly patrolling along the banks of the Rhone, but the care, according to the boy's account, they took to avoid being seen. In an instant we were on the alert; but it was too late; our vessel was surrounded, and amongst the custom-house officers I observed several gendarmes; and, as terrified at the sight of their uniform as I was brave at the sight of any other, I sprang into the hold, opened a port, and dropped into the river, dived, and only rose at intervals to breathe, until I reached a cutting that led from the Rhone to the canal that runs from Beaucaire to Aigues-Mortes. I was now safe, for I could swim along the cutting without being seen, and I reached the canal in safety. I had designedly taken this direction. I have already told your excellency of an aubergiste of Nîmes who had set up a little inn on the road from Bellegarde to Beaucaire."

"Yes," said Monte-Cristo, "I perfectly recollect him; I think he was your colleague."

"Precisely," answered Bertuccio; "but he had, seven or eight years before this period, sold his establishment to a tailor at Marseilles, who, having almost ruined himself in his old trade, wished to make his fortune in

another. Of course we made the same arrangements with the new landlord that we had with the old; and it was of this man that I intended to ask shelter."

"What was his name?" inquired the count, who seemed to become somewhat interested in Bertuccio's story.

"Gaspard Caderousse. He had married a woman from the village of Carconte, and whom we did not know by any other name than that of her village. She was suffering from the marsh fever, and seemed dying by inches. As for her husband, he was a strapping fellow of forty or five-and-forty, who had more than once, in time of danger, given ample proof of his presence of mind and courage."

"And you say," interrupted Monte-Cristo, "that this took place towards the year——"

"1829, M. le Comte."

"In what month?"

"June."

"The beginning or the end?"

"The evening of the 3rd."

"Ah," said Monte-Cristo, "the evening of the 3rd of June 1829. Go on."

"It was from Caderousse that I intended demanding shelter; and, as we never entered by the door that opened on to the road, I resolved not to break through the rule, and, climbing over the garden hedge, I crept amongst the olive and wild fig trees; and, fearing that Caderousse might have some one there, I entered a kind of shed in which I had often passed the night, and which was only separated from the inn by a partition in which holes had been made in order to enable us to watch an opportunity of announcing our presence. My intention was, if Caderousse was alone, to acquaint him with my presence, finish the meal the custom-house officers had interrupted, and profit by the threatened storm to return to the Rhone and ascertain the state of our vessel and its crew. I stepped into the shed; and it was for-

tunate I did so, for at that moment Caderousse entered with a stranger.

"I waited patiently, not to overhear what they said, but because I could do nothing else; besides, the same thing had occurred often before. The man who was with Caderousse was evidently a stranger to the south of France. He was one of those merchants who come to sell jewellery at the fair of Beaucaire, and who, during the month the fair lasts, and during which there is so great an influx of merchants and customers from all parts of Europe, often have dealing to the amount of 100,000 to 150,000 francs (£4,000 to £6,000).

"Caderousse entered hastily.

"Then, seeing that the room was, as usual, empty, and only guarded by the dog, he called to his wife,—

"'Hilloa, Carconte!' said he, 'the worthy priest has not deceived us; the diamond is real.'

"An exclamation of joy was heard, and the staircase creaked beneath a feeble step.

"'What do you say?' asked his wife, pale as death.

"'I say that the diamond is real, and that this gentleman, one of the first jewellers of Paris, will give us 50,000 francs for it (£2,000). Only, in order to satisfy himself it really belongs to us, he wishes you to relate to him, as I have done already, the miraculous manner in which the diamond came into our possession. In the meantime, please to sit down, monsieur, and I will fetch you some refreshment.'

"The jeweller examined attentively the interior of the inn and the visible poverty of the persons who were about to sell him a diamond that seemed to have come from the casket or a prince.

"'Relate your story, madame,' said he, wishing, no doubt, to profit by the absence of the husband, so that the latter could not influence the wife's story, to see if the two recitals tallied.

"'Oh,' returned she, 'it was a gift of Heaven!

My husband was a great friend, in 1814 or 1815, of a sailor named Edmond Dantès. This poor fellow, whom Caderousse had forgotten, had not forgotten him, and at his death bequeathed this diamond to him.'

"'But how did he obtain it?' asked the jeweller. 'Had he it before he was imprisoned?'

"'No, monsieur; but it appears that in prison he made the acquaintance of a rich Englishman; and as in prison he fell sick, and Dantès took the same care of him as if he had been his brother, the Englishman, when he was set free, gave this stone to Dantès, who, less fortunate, died, and, in his turn, left it us, and charged the excellent abbé who was here this morning to deliver it.'

"'The same story!' muttered the jeweller; 'and, improbable as it seems at first, the history may be true. There's only the price we are not agreed about.'

"'How not agreed about?' said Caderousse. 'I thought we agreed for the price I asked.'

"'That is,' replied the jeweller, 'I offered 40,000 francs.'

"'Forty thousand!' cried La Carconte; 'we will not part with it for that sum. The abbé told us it was worth 50,000 without the setting.'

"'What was the abbé's name?' asked the indefatigable questioner.

"'The Abbé Busoni,' said La Carconte.

"'He was a foreigner?'

"'An Italian from the neighbourhood of Mantua, I believe.'

"'Let me see this diamond again,' replied the jeweller; 'the first time you are often mistaken as to the value of a stone.'

"Caderousse took from his pocket a small case of black shagreen, opened it, and gave it to the jeweller. At the sight of the diamond, which was as large as a hazel-nut, La Carconte's eyes sparkled with cupidity."

"And what did you think of this fine story, eavesdropper?" said Monte-Cristo. "Did you credit it?"

"Yes, your excellency. I did not look on Caderousse as a bad man, and I thought him incapable of committing a crime, or even a theft."

"That did more honour to your heart than to your experience, M. Bertuccio. Had you known this Edmond Dantès of whom they spoke?"

"No, your excellency, I had never heard of him before, and never but once afterwards, and that was from the Abbé Busoni himself, when I saw him in the prison at Nîmes."

"Go on."

"The jeweller took the ring, and, drawing from his pocket a pair of steel pliers and a small set of copper scales, taking the stone out of its setting, he weighed it carefully.

"'I will give you 45,000' said he, 'but not a halfpenny more; besides, as that is the exact value of the stone, I brought just that sum with me.'

"'Oh, that's no matter,' replied Caderousse; 'I will go back with you to fetch the other 5,000 francs.'

"'No,' returned the jeweller, giving back the diamond and the ring to Caderousse—'no, it is worth no more; and I am sorry I offered so much, for the stone has a flaw in it which I had not seen. However, I will not go from my word, and I will give 45,000.'

"'At least replace the diamond in the ring,' said Carconte sharply.

"'Ah, true,' replied the jeweller; and he reset the stone.

"'No matter,' observed Caderousse, replacing the box in his pocket, 'some one else will purchase it.'

"'Yes,' continued the jeweller; 'but some one else will not be so easy as I am, or content himself with the same story. It is not natural that a man like you should possess such a diamond. He will inform against you. You will have to find the Abbé Busoni; and abbés who

give diamonds worth two thousand louis are rare. Justice would seize it, and put you in prison. If at the end of two or three months you are set at liberty, the ring will be lost, or a false stone worth three francs will be given you instead of a diamond worth 50,000 or perhaps 55,000 francs, but which, you must allow, one runs considerable risk in purchasing.'

"Caderousse and his wife looked eagerly at each other.

"'No,' said Caderousse, 'we are not rich enough to lose 5,000 francs.'

"'As you please, my dear sir,' said the jeweller; 'I had, however, as you see, brought you the money in bright coin.'

"And he drew from his pocket a handful of gold, which he made to sparkle in the dazzled eyes of the innkeeper, and in the other hand he held a packet of bank-notes.

"There was evidently a severe struggle in the mind of Caderousse. It was evident that the small shagreen case, which he turned and re-turned in his hand, did not seem to him commensurate in value to the enormous sum which fascinated his gaze.

"He turned towards his wife.

"'What do you think of this?' he asked, in a low voice.

"'Let him have it—let him have it,' she said. 'If he returns to Beaucaire without the diamond, he will inform against us; and, as he says, who knows if we shall ever again see the Abbé Busino? In all probability we shall never see him.'

"'Well, then, so I will!' said Caderousse. 'So you may have the diamond for 45,000 francs.'

"'Come, come, give it to me! What a strange fellow you are!' said the jeweller, taking the diamond from his hand. 'I give you 45,000 francs—that is, 2,500 livres of income—a fortune such as I wish I had myself, and you are not satisfied!'

"'And the five-and-forty thousand francs,' inquired

Caderousse in a hoarse voice, 'where are they? Come, let us see them!'

"'Here they are,' replied the jeweller; and he counted out upon the table 15,000 francs in gold and 30,000 francs in bank-notes.

"'Wait whilst I light the lamp,' said La Carconte; 'it is growing dark, and there may be some mistake.'

"In fact, the night had come on during this conversation, and with the night the storm which had been threatening for the last half-hour. The thunder was heard growling in the distance; but neither the jeweller, nor Caderousse, nor La Carconte seemed to heed it, absorbed as they were all three with the demon of gain.

"'Well,' inquired the jeweller, 'is the cash all right?'

"'Yes,' said Caderousse. 'Give me the pocket-book, La Carconte, and find a bag somewhere.'

"La Carconte went to a cupboard and returned with an old leathern pocket-book, from which she took some greasy letters, and put in their place the bank-notes and a bag in which were at the moment two or three crowns of six livres each, and which, in all probability, formed the entire fortune of the miserable couple.

"'There,' said Caderousse; 'and now, although you have wronged us of perhaps 10,000 francs, will you have your supper with us? I invite you with good-will.'

"'Thank you,' replied the jeweller; 'it must be getting late, and I must return to Beaucaire: my wife will be getting uneasy.' He drew out his watch, and exclaimed: '*Morbleu!* nearly nine o'clock! Why, I shall not get back to Beaucaire before midnight! Good-night, my dears. If the Abbé Busoni should by any accident return, think of me.'

"At this moment there was a tremendous clap of thunder, accompanied by a flash of lightning so vivid that it quite eclipsed the light of the lamp.

"'Oh dear!' exclaimed Caderousse. 'You cannot think of going out in such weather as this!'

"'Oh, I am not afraid of thunder,' said the jeweller.

"'And then there are robbers,' said La Carconte. 'The road is never very safe during fair time.'

"'Oh, as to the robbers,' said Joannes, 'here is something for them;' and he drew from his pocket a pair of small pistols loaded to the muzzle. 'Here,' said he, 'are dogs who bark and bite at the same time. They are for the two first who shall have a longing for your diamond, Daddy Caderousse.'

"Caderousse and his wife again interchanged a meaning look. It seemed as though they were both inspired at the same time with some horrible thought.

"'Well, then, a good journey to you!' said Caderousse.

"'Thank ye,' replied the jeweller. He then took his cane, which he had placed against an old cupboard, and went out. At the moment when he opened the door, such a gust of wind came in that the lamp was nearly extinguished. 'Oh,' said he, 'this is very nice weather; and two leagues to go in such a storm!'

"'Remain,' said Caderousse. 'You can sleep here.'

"'Yes, do stay,' added La Carconte, in a tremulous voice; 'we will take every care of you.'

"'No, I must sleep at Beaucaire. So, once more, good-night!'

"Caderousse followed him slowly to the threshold.

"'I can neither see heaven nor earth!' said the jeweller, who was outside the door. 'Do I turn to the right or left hand?'

"'To the right,' said Caderousse. 'You cannot go wrong; the road is bordered by trees on both sides.'

"'Good—all right!' said a voice almost lost in the distance.

"'Close the door,' said La Carconte; 'I do not like open doors when it thunders.'

"'Particularly when there is money in the house, eh?' answered Caderousse, double-locking the door.

"He came into the room, went to the cupboard, took out the bag and pocket-book, and both began, for

the third time, to count their gold and bank-notes. I never saw such an expression of cupidity as the flickering lamp revealed in the two countenances. The woman especially was hideous. The feverish tremulousness she usually had was redoubled. Her countenance had become livid, and her eyes resembled burning coals.

"'Why,' she inquired, in a hoarse voice, 'did you invite him to sleep here to-night?'

"'Why?' said Caderousse, with a shudder; 'why, that he might not have the trouble of returning to Beaucaire.'

"'Ah,' responded the woman, with an expression impossible to render; 'I thought it was for something else.'

"'Woman, woman, why do you have such ideas?' cried Caderousse; 'or if you have them, why don't you keep them to yourself?'

"'Well,' said La Carconte, after a moment's pause, 'you are not a man!'

"'What do you mean?' added Caderousse.

"'If you had been a man, you would not have let him go from here.'

"'Woman!'

"'Or else he should not have reached Beaucaire.'

"'Woman!'

"'The road takes a turn—he is obliged to follow it—whilst alongside of the canal there is a shorter road.'

"'Woman! you offend the *bon Dieu!* There—listen!' And at this moment there was heard a tremendous peal of thunder, whilst the livid lightning illumined the room; and the thunder, then rolling away to a distance, seemed as though it left the cursed abode lingeringly.

"'Mercy!' said Caderousse, crossing himself.

"At the same moment, and in the midst of the silence so full of terror which usually follows claps of thunder, they heard a knocking at the door. Caderousse and his wife started and looked aghast at each other.

"'Who's there?' cried Caderousse, rising, and draw-

ing up in a heap the gold and notes scattered over the table, and which he covered with his two hands.

"'It is I!' shouted a voice.

"'And who are you?"

"'Eh, *pardieu!* Joannes the jeweller.'

"'Well, and you said I offended the *bon Dieu*,' said Carconte, with a horrid smile. 'Why it is the *bon Dieu* who sends him back again.'

"Caderousse fell back, pale and breathless, in his chair.

"La Carconte, on the contrary, rose, and going with a firm step towards the door, opened it, saying, as she did so,—

"'Come in, dear M. Joannes.'

"'*Ma foi!*' said the jeweller, drenched with rain, 'it seems as if I was not to return to Beaucaire to-night. The shortest follies are best, my dear Caderousse. You offered me hospitality, and I accept it, and have returned to sleep beneath your friendly roof.'

"Caderousse stammered out some words, whilst he wiped away the damp that started to his brow. La Carconte double-locked the door behind the jeweller.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE RAIN OF BLOOD.

"As the jeweller returned to the apartment, he cast around him a scrutinizing glance; but there was nothing to excite suspicion if it existed not, or to confirm it if already awakened. Caderousse's hands still grasped his gold and bank-notes, and La Carconte called up her sweetest smiles while welcoming the reappearance of their guest.

"'Heyday!' said the jeweller, 'you seem, my good friends, to have had some fears respecting the accuracy

of your money, by counting it over so carefully directly I was gone.'

"'No, no,' answered Caderousse, 'that was not my reason, I can assure you; but the circumstances by which we have become possessed of this wealth are so unexpected as to make us scarcely credit our good fortune, and it is only by placing the actual proof of our riches before our eyes that we can persuade ourselves the whole affair is not a dream.'

"The jeweller smiled.

"'Have you any other guests in your house?' inquired he.

"'Nobody but ourselves,' replied Caderousse. 'The fact is, we do not lodge travellers; indeed, our auberge is so near to the town, that nobody would think of stopping here.'

"'Then I am afraid I shall very much inconvenience you!'

"'Oh, dear me, no; indeed, good sir, you will not,' said La Carconte, in her most gracious manner. 'I vow and protest your passing the night under shelter of our poor roof will not make the slightest difference in the world to us.'

"'But where will you manage to stow me?'

"'In the chamber overhead.'

"'Surely that is where you yourselves sleep?"

"'Never mind that; we have a second bed in the adjoining room.'

"Caderousse stared at his wife with much astonishment.

"'Now then, my dear sir,' said La Carconte, as she placed a bottle of wine on the table, 'supper is ready whenever you are inclined to partake of it.'

"'But you are going to sit down with me, are you not?' asked Joannes.

"'I shall not take any supper to-night,' said Caderousse.

"'We dined so very late,' hastily interposed La Carconte.

"'Then it seems I am to eat alone,' remarked the jeweller.

"'Oh, we shall have the pleasure of waiting upon you,' answered La Carconte, with an eager attention she was not accustomed to manifest even to guests who paid for what they took.

"From one minute to another Caderousse darted on his wife keen, searching glances, but rapid as the lightning flash.

"The storm still continued.

"'There, there!' said La Carconte; 'do you hear that? Upon my word, you did well to return hither.'

"'Nevertheless,' replied the jeweller, 'if by the time I have finished my supper the tempest has at all abated, I shall make another attempt to complete my journey.'

"'Oh,' said Caderousse, shaking his head, 'there is not the slightest chance of its abating. It is the mistral, and that will be sure to last till to-morrow morning.' He then sighed heavily.

"'Well,' said the jeweller as he placed himself at the table, 'all I can say is, so much the worse for those who are abroad and cannot obtain a shelter.'

"'Ah,' chimed in La Carconte, 'they will have a wretched night of it, be they who they may.'

"Caderousse, meanwhile, continued in gloomy silence to pace the room, sedulously avoiding the sight of his guest; but as soon as the stranger had completed his repast, the agitated aubergiste went eagerly to the door and opened it.

"'The storm seems over,' said he.

"But, as if to contradict his statement, at that instant a violent clap of thunder seemed to shake the house to its very foundation, while a sudden gust of wind, mingled with rain, extinguished the lamp he held in his hand. Trembling and awestruck, Caderousse hastily shut the door and returned to his guest, while La Carconte lighted a candle by the smouldering ashes that glimmered on the hearth.

"'You must be tired,' said she to the jeweller. 'I have spread a pair of my finest and whitest sheets on your bed, so you have nothing to do but to sleep as soundly as I wish you may. You can easily find your room; it is exactly over this.'

"Joannes remained a short time listening whether the storm seemed to abate in its fury, but a brief space of time sufficed to assure him that, far from diminishing, the violence of the rain and thunder momentarily increased. Resigning himself, therefore, to what seemed inevitable, he bade his host good-night, and mounted to his sleeping apartment. As he passed over my head, the flooring seemed to creak beneath his tread, proving how slight must be the division between us. The quick, eager glance of La Carconte followed him as he ascended the staircase; while Caderousse, on the contrary, turned his back, and seemed most anxiously to avoid even glancing at him.

"All these particulars did not strike me as painfully at the time as they have since done; in fact, all that had happened (with the exception of the story of the diamond, which certainly did wear an air of improbability) appeared natural enough, and called for neither apprehension nor mistrust. But, worn out as I was with fatigue, and fully purposing to proceed onwards directly the tempest abated, I determined to take advantage of the comparative silence and tranquillity that prevailed to obtain the refreshment of a few hours' sleep. Overhead I could accurately distinguish every movement of the jeweller, who, after making the best arrangements in his power for passing a comfortable night, threw himself on his bed, and I could hear it creak and groan beneath his weight. Insensibly my eyelids grew heavy, deep sleep stole over me, and having no suspicion of anything wrong, I sought not to shake it off. How long I had been in this unconscious state I know not, when I was suddenly aroused by the report of a pistol, followed by a fearful cry. Weak and tottering footsteps resounded

across the chamber above me, and the next instant a dull, heavy weight seemed to fall powerless on the staircase. I had not yet fully recovered my recollection when again I heard groans, mingled with half-stifled cries, as if from persons engaged in a deadly struggle. These evidences of the perpetration of some violent deed effectually roused me from my drowsy lethargy. Hastily raising myself on one arm, I looked around, but all was dark; and it seemed to me as if the rain must have penetrated through the flooring of the room above, for some kind of moisture appeared to fall, drop by drop, upon my forehead, and when I passed my hand across my brow I felt it wet and clammy.

"To the fearful noises that had awakened me had succeeded the most perfect silence—unbroken, save by the footsteps of a man walking about in the chamber above. By the creaking of the staircase, I judged the individual, whoever he was, was proceeding to the lower apartment. In another minute I heard some person moving there; and, looking through, I saw a man stooping towards the fire to light a candle he held in his hand. As he turned round, I recognized the features of Caderousse—pale, ghastly, and convulsed—while the front and sleeves of his dress were covered with blood! Having obtained the light he had evidently descended to seek, he hurried upstairs again, and once more I heard his rapid and uneasy step in the chamber above. Ere long he came below, holding in his hand the small shagreen case, which he opened, to assure himself it contained the diamond, seemed to hesitate as to which pocket he should put it in; then, as if dissatisfied with the security of either pocket, he deposited it in his red handkerchief, which he carefully rolled round his head. After this he took from his cupboard the bank-notes and gold he had put there, thrust the one in the pocket of his trousers and the other into that of his waistcoat, hastily tied up a small bundle of linen, and rushing towards the door, disappeared in the darkness of the night.

"Then all became clear and manifest to me; and I reproached myself with what had happened, as though I myself had done the guilty deed. I fancied that I still heard faint moans, and imagining that the unfortunate jeweller might not be quite dead, I determined to go to his relief, by way of atoning in some slight degree, not for the crime I had committed, but for that which I had not endeavoured to prevent. For this purpose I applied all the strength I possessed to force an entrance from the cramped spot in which I lay to the adjoining room; the badly-arranged planks which alone divided me from it, yielded to my efforts, and I found myself in the house; hastily snatching up the lighted candle, I hurried to the staircase; towards the middle of it I stumbled over a human body lying quite across the stairs. As I stooped to raise it, I discovered in the agonized features those of La Carconte.

"The pistol I had heard had, doubtless, been discharged at the unfortunate woman, whose throat it had frightfully lacerated, leaving a gaping wound from which, as well as the mouth, the blood was welling in sanguinary streams.

"Finding the miserable creature past all human aid, I strode past her and ascended to the sleeping chamber, which presented an appearance of the wildest disorder. The furniture had been knocked over in the deadly struggle that had taken place there, and the sheets, to which the unfortunate jeweller had doubtless clung, were dragged across the room. The murdered man lay on the ground, his head leaning against the wall, weltering in a gory stream, poured forth from three large wounds in his breast; there was a fourth gash, but the blood was prevented escaping in consequence of the weapon (a large table-knife) still sticking in it.

"I stumbled over some object. I stooped to examine; it was the second pistol, which had not gone off, probably from the powder being wet. I approached the jeweller, who was not quite dead, and at the sound of my

footsteps, causing as they did the creaking of the floor, he opened his eyes, fixed them on me with an anxious and inquiring gaze, moved his lips as though trying to speak, then overcome by the effort, fell back and expired.

"This appalling sight almost bereft me of my senses, and finding that I could no longer be of service to any one in the house, my only desire was to fly from such an accumulation of horrors as quickly as I could. Almost distracted, I rushed towards the staircase, clasping my burning temples with both hands, and uttering cries of horror.

"Upon reaching the room below, I found five or six custom-house officers accompanied by an armed troop of soldiery, who immediately seized me, ere, indeed, I had sufficiently collected my ideas to offer any resistance. In truth, my senses seemed to have wholly forsaken me, and when I strove to speak, a few inarticulate sounds alone escaped my lips.

"As I noticed the significant manner in which the whole party pointed to my bloodstained garments, I involuntarily surveyed myself, and then I discovered that the thick warm drops that had so bedewed me as I lay beneath the staircase, must have been the blood of La Carconte. Paralyzed with horror, I could barely indicate by a movement of my hand the spot where I had concealed myself.

"'What does he mean?' asked a gendarme.

"One of the douaniers went to the place I directed.

"'He means,' replied the man upon his return, 'that he effected his entrance by means of this hole,' showing the place where I had broken my way through the planks into the house.

"Then, and not before, the true nature of my situation flashed on me, and I saw that I was considered the guilty author of all that had occurred. With this frightful conviction of my danger, I recovered force and energy enough to free myself from the hands of those who held me, while I managed to stammer forth,—

"'I did not do it! Indeed, indeed, I did not!'

"A couple of gendarmes held the muzzles of their carbines against my breast.

"'Stir but a step,' said they, 'and you are a dead man!'

"'Why should you threaten me with death,' cried I, 'when I have already declared my innocence?'

"'Tush, tush!' cried the men; 'keep your innocent stories to tell to the judge at Nîmes. Meanwhile, come along with us, and the best advice we can give you is to do so unresistingly.'

"Alas! resistance was far from my thoughts. I was utterly overpowered by surprise and terror; and without a word I suffered myself to be handcuffed and tied to a horse's tail, in which disgraceful plight I arrived at Nîmes.

"It seems I had been tracked by a douanier, who had lost sight of me near the auberge. Feeling assured that I intended to pass the night there, he had returned to summon his comrades, who arrived just in time to hear the report of the pistol, and to take me in the midst of such circumstantial proofs of my guilt as rendered all hopes of proving my innocence utterly at an end. One only chance was left me, that of beseeching the magistrate before whom I was taken to cause every inquiry to be made for an individual named the Abbé Busoni, who had stopped at the auberge of the Pont du Gard on the morning previous to the murder. If, indeed, Caderousse had not invented the story relative to the diamond, and that there existed no such person as the Abbé Busoni, then, indeed, I was lost past redemption, or, at least, my life hung upon the feeble chance of Caderousse himself being apprehended and confessing the whole truth.

"Two months passed away in hopeless expectation on my part, while I must do the magistrate justice by declaring he used every means to obtain information of the person I declared could exculpate me if he would. Caderousse still evaded all pursuit, and I had resigned

myself to what seemed my inevitable fate. My trial was to come on at the approaching sessions; when on the eighth of September—that is to say, precisely three months and five days after the events which had perilled my life—the Abbé Busoni, whom I never ventured to believe I should see, presented himself at the prison doors, saying he understood one of the prisoners wished to speak to him. He added that, having learnt the particulars of my imprisonment he hastened to comply with my desire. You may easily imagine with what eagerness I welcomed him, and how minutely I related the whole of what I had seen and heard. I felt some degree of nervousness as I entered upon the history of the diamond; but to my inexpressible astonishment, he confirmed it in every particular, and to my equal surprise, he seemed to place entire belief in all I stated. And then it was, that won by his mild charity, perceiving him acquainted with all the habits and customs of my own country, and considering also that pardon for the only crime of which I was really guilty might come with a double power from lips so benevolent and kind, I besought him to receive my confession, under the seal of which I recounted the affair of Auteuil, in all its details, as well as every other transaction of my life. That which I had done by the impulse of my best feelings produced the same effect as though it had been the result of calculation. My voluntary confession of the assassination at Auteuil proved to him that I had not committed that with which I stood accused. When he quitted me he bade me be of good courage, and rely upon his doing all in his power to convince my judges of my innocence.

"I had speedy proofs that the excellent abbé was engaged in my behalf, for the rigours of my imprisonment were alleviated by many trifling though acceptable indulgences; and I was told that my trial was to be postponed to the assizes following those now being held.

"In the interim it pleased Providence to cause the

apprehension of Caderousse, who was discovered in some distant country and brought back to France, where he made a full confession, refusing to make the fact of his wife's having suggested and arranged the murder any excuse for his own guilt. The wretched man was sentenced to the galleys for life, and I immediately set at liberty."

"And then it was, I presume," said Monte-Cristo, "that you came to me as the bearer of a letter from the Abbé Busoni?"

"It was, your excellency; the benevolent abbé took an evident interest in all that concerned me.

"'Your mode of life as a smuggler,' said he to me one day, 'will be the ruin of you if you persist in it. Let me advise you when you get out of prison to choose something more safe as well as respectable.'

"'But how,' inquired I, 'am I to maintain myself and my poor sister?'

"'A person, whose confessor I am,' replied he, 'and who entertains a high regard for me, applied to me a short time since to procure him a confidential servant. Would you like such a post? If so, I will give you a letter of introduction to the friend I allude to.

"'Here, take this,' continued he, after rapidly writing the few lines I brought to your excellency, and upon receipt of which you deigned to receive me into your service, and I venture most respectfully and humbly to ask whether your excellency has ever had cause to repent having done so?"

"On the contrary, Bertuccio, I have ever found you faithful, honest, and deserving. One fault I find with you, and that is, your not having placed sufficient confidence in me."

"Indeed, your excellency, I know not what you mean."

"Simply this: how comes it, that having both a sister and an adopted son, you have never spoken to me of either?"

"Alas! I have still to recount the most distressing period of my life. Anxious, as you may suppose I was, to behold and comfort my dear sister, I lost no time in hastening to Corsica, but when I arrived at Rogliano, I found a house of mourning and of desolation, the consequences of a scene so horrible that the neighbours remember and speak of it to this day. Acting by my advice, my poor sister had refused to comply with the unreasonable demands of Benedetto, who was continually tormenting her for money as long as he believed there was a sou left in her possession. One morning that he had demanded money, threatening her with the severest consequences if she did not supply him with what he desired, he disappeared throughout the whole of the day, leaving the kind-hearted Assunta, who loved him as if he were her own child, to weep over his conduct and bewail his absence. Evening came, and still with all the patient solicitude of a mother she watched for his return.

"As the eleventh hour struck, he entered with a swaggering air, attended by two of the most dissolute and reckless of his ordinary companions. As poor Assunta rose to clasp her truant in her arms, forgetting all but the happiness of seeing him again, she was seized upon by the three ruffians, while the unnatural Benedetto exclaimed,—

"'Come, if the old girl refuses to tell us where she keeps her money, let us just give her a taste of the torture; that will make her find her tongue, I'll engage.'

"It unfortunately happened that our neighbour Wasilio was at Bastia, leaving no person in his house but his wife; no human creature except she could hear or see anything that took place within our dwelling. Two of the brutal companions of Benedetto held poor Assunta, who, unable to conceive that any harm was intended her, smiled innocently and kindly in the face of those who were soon to become her executioners, while the third ruffian proceeded to barricade the doors and windows; then return-

ing to his infamous accomplices, the three united in stifling the cries uttered by the poor victim at the sight of these alarming preparations. This effected, they dragged the unoffending object of their barbarity towards the fire, on which they forcibly held her feet, expecting by this diabolical expedient to wring from her where her supposed treasure was secreted. In the struggles made by my poor sister, her clothes caught fire, and her fiendish and cowardly tormentors were compelled to let go their hold in order to preserve themselves from sharing the same fate. Covered with flames, Assunta rushed wildly to the door, but it was fastened; tortured by the agony she endured, the unfortunate sufferer flew to the windows, but they were also strongly barricaded. Then her cries and shrieks of anguish filled the place; to these succeeded convulsive sobs and deep groans, which, subsiding in faint moans, at length died away, and all was still as the grave.

"Next morning, as soon as the wife of Wasilio could muster up courage to venture abroad, she caused the door of our dwelling to be opened by the public authorities, when Assunta, although dreadfully burnt, was found still breathing. Every drawer and closet in the house had been forced open, and everything worth carrying off stolen from them.

"Benedetto never again appeared at Rogliano, neither have I since that day either seen or heard anything concerning him.

"It was subsequently to these dreadful events that I waited on your excellency, to whom it would have been folly to have mentioned Benedetto, since all trace of him seemed entirely lost, or my sister, since she was dead."

"And in what light did you view the tragical occurrence?" inquired Monte-Cristo.

"As a punishment for the crime I had committed," answered Bertuccio. "Oh, those Villeforts are an accursed race!"

"Truly they are," murmured the count, with a most singular expression of countenance.

"And now, M. le Comte," added the steward, bending humbly forward, "you know every secret of my life—you are my judge on earth, as the Almighty is in heaven. Have you no words of consolation to bestow on a repentant sinner?"

"My good friend, I know of none more calculated to calm your mind than the expressions employed by the Abbé Busoni when speaking of you to me. Villefort, the man you killed, merited the punishment he received at your hands, as a just reward for the wrongs he had done you, and it may be for other crimes likewise. Benedetto, if still living, will become the instrument of divine retribution in some way or other, and then be duly punished in his turn. As far as you yourself are concerned, I see but one point in which you are really guilty. Ask yourself wherefore, after rescuing the infant from its living grave, you did not restore it to its mother? There was the crime, Bertuccio! that was where you became really culpable."

Bertuccio bowed lowly and respectfully, and turned away, sighing heavily as he quitted his patron.

When he had quite disappeared, Monte-Cristo arose, and taking three or four steps onward, he murmured,—

"Here, beneath this plane tree, must have been where the infant's grave was dug. There is the little door opening into the garden. At this corner is the private staircase communicating with the sleeping apartment. There will be no necessity for me to make a note of these particulars, for there, before my eyes, beneath my feet, all around me, I have the plan sketched with all the living reality of truth."

After making the tour of the garden a second time, the count regained the house and re-entered his carriage; while Bertuccio, who perceived the thoughtful expression of his master's features, took his seat beside the

driver without uttering a word. The carriage proceeded rapidly towards Paris.

That same evening, upon reaching his abode in the Champs Elysées, the Count of Monte-Cristo went over the whole building with the air of one long acquainted with each nook and corner. Nor, although preceding the party, did he once mistake one door for another, or commit the smallest error when choosing any particular corridor or staircase to conduct him to a place or suite of rooms he desired to visit. Ali was his principal attendant during the somewhat late hour of his survey. Having given various orders to Bertuccio relative to the improvements and alterations he desired to make in the house, the count, drawing out his watch, said to the attentive Nubian,—

"It is half-past eleven o'clock. Haydée will not be long ere she arrives. Have the French attendants been summoned to await her coming?"

Ali extended his hands towards the apartments destined for the fair Greek, which were at a distance from the habitable part of the dwelling, and so effectually concealed by means of a tapestried entrance that it would have puzzled the most curious to have divined that beyond that spot lay hid a suite of rooms, fitted up with a rich magnificence worthy of the lovely being who was to tenant them.

Ali having pointed to the apartments, counted three on the fingers of his right hand, and then, placing it beneath his head, shut his eyes, and feigned to sleep.

"I understand," said Monte-Cristo, well acquainted with Ali's pantomime; "you mean to tell me that three female attendants await their new mistress in her sleeping chamber."

Ali, with considerable animation, made a sign in the affirmative.

"The young lady must needs be fatigued with her journey," continued Monte-Cristo, "and will, no doubt, wish to retire to rest immediately upon her arrival.

Desire the French attendants not to weary her with questions, but merely pay their respectful duty and retire. You will also see that the Greek servant holds no communication with those of this country."

Ali bowed obediently and reverentially.

Just at that moment voices were heard hailing the concierge. The gate opened, a carriage rolled down the avenue and stopped at the flight of steps leading to the house. The count hastily descended, and presented himself at the already opened carriage-door to assist a young female, completely enveloped in a mantle of green and gold, to alight.

The female raised the hand extended towards her to her lips, and kissed it with a mixture of love and respect. Some few words passed between them in that sonorous language in which Homer makes his gods converse. The female spoke with an expression of deep tenderness, while the count replied with an air of gentle gravity.

Preceded by Ali, who carried a rose-coloured flambeau in his hand, the female, who was no other than the lovely Greek who had been Monte-Cristo's companion in Italy, was conducted to her apartments, while the count retired to the pavilion reserved for himself.

In another hour every light in the house was extinguished, and it might have been thought that all its inmates slept.

CHAPTER XLVI.

UNLIMITED CREDIT.

About two o'clock the following day a calèche, drawn by a pair of magnificent English horses, stopped at the door of Monte-Cristo, and a person dressed in a blue coat, with buttons of a similar colour, a white waistcoat, over which was displayed a massive gold chain, brown trousers, and a quantity of black hair, descending so low

over his eyebrows as to leave it doubtful whether it were not artificial, so little did its jetty glossiness assimilate with the deep wrinkles stamped on his features—a person, in a word, who, although evidently past fifty, desired to be taken for not more than forty, bent forwards from the carriage-door, on the panels of which were emblazoned the armorial bearings of a baron, and directed his groom to inquire at the porter's lodge whether the Count of Monte-Cristo resided there, and if he were within.

While waiting, the occupant of the carriage surveyed the house, the garden so far as he could distinguish it, and the livery of the servants who passed to and fro, with an attention so close as to be somewhat impertinent. The glance of this individual was keen, but evincing rather cunning than intelligence; his lips were straight, and so thin that, as they closed, they were compressed within the mouth; his cheek-bones were broad and projecting—a never-failing proof of audacity and craftiness—while the flatness of his forehead, and the enlargement of the back of his skull, which rose much higher than his large and vulgarly-shaped ears, combined to form a physiognomy anything but prepossessing, save in the eyes of such as considered that the owner of so splendid an equipage must needs be all that was admirable and enviable, more especially when they gazed on the enormous diamond that glittered in his shirt, and the red ribbon that depended from his button-hole.

The groom, in obedience to his orders, tapped at the window of the porter's lodge, saying,—

"Pray, does not the Count of Monte-Cristo live here?"

"His excellency does reside here," replied the concierge, "but," added he, glancing an inquiring look at Ali.

Ali returned a sign in the negative.

"But what?" asked the groom.

"His excellency does not receive visitors to-day."

"Then take my master's card. You'll see who master

is—M. le Baron Danglars! Be sure to give the card to the count, and say that, although in haste to attend the Chamber, my master came out of his way to have the honour of calling upon him."

"I never speak to his excellency," replied the concierge; "the valet-de-chambre will carry your message."

The groom returned to the carriage.

"Well?" asked Danglars.

The man, somewhat crestfallen by the rebuke he had received, detailed to his master all that had passed between himself and the concierge.

"Bless me!" murmured M. le Baron Danglars, "this must surely be a prince instead of a count by their styling him 'excellency,' and only venturing to address him by the medium of his valet-de-chambre. However, it does not signify; he has a letter of credit on me, so I must see him when he requires his money."

Then, throwing himself back in his carriage, Danglars called out to his coachman, in a voice that might be heard across the road,—

"To the Chambre des Députés."

Apprised in time of the visit paid him, Monte-Cristo had, from behind the blinds of his pavilion, as minutely observed the baron by means of an excellent lorgnette as Danglars himself had scrutinized the house, garden, and servants.

"That fellow has a decidedly bad countenance," said the count, in a tone of disgust, as he shut up his glass into its ivory case. "How comes it that all do not retreat in aversion at sight of that flat, receding serpent-like forehead, round vulture-shaped head, and sharp-hooked nose like the beak of a buzzard?—Ali!" cried he, striking at the same time on the brazen gong.

Ali appeared.

"Summon Bertuccio!" said the count.

Almost immediately Bertuccio entered the apartment.

"Did your excellency desire to see me?" inquired he.

"I did," replied the count. "You no doubt observed the horses standing a few minutes since at the door?"

"Certainly, your excellency; I noticed them for their remarkable beauty."

"Then how comes it," said Monte-Cristo with a frown, "that, when I desired you to purchase for me the finest pair of horses to be found in Paris, you permitted so splendid a couple as those I allude to, to be in the possession of any one but myself?"

At the look of displeasure, added to the angry tone in which the count spoke, Ali turned pale and held down his head.

"It is not your fault, my good Ali," said the count in the Arabic language, and in a tone of such gentleness as none would have given him credit for being capable of feeling—"it is not your fault. You do not profess to understand the choice of English horses."

The countenance of poor Ali recovered its serenity.

"Permit me to assure your excellency," said Bertuccio, "that the horses you speak of were not to be sold when I purchased yours."

Monte-Cristo shrugged up his shoulders.

"It seems, M. l'Intendant," said he, "that you have yet to learn that all things are to be sold to such as care to pay the price."

"M. le Comte is not, perhaps, aware that M. Danglars gave 16,000 francs for his horses?"

"Very well; then offer him double that sum—a banker never loses an opportunity of doubling his capital."

"Is your excellency really in earnest?" inquired the steward.

Monte-Cristo regarded the person who durst presume to doubt his words with the look of one equally surprised and displeased.

"I have to pay a visit this evening," replied he. "I desire that these horses, with completely new harness, may be at the door with my carriage."

Bertuccio bowed, and was about to retire; but when he reached the door he paused, and then said,—

"At what o'clock does your excellency wish the carriage and horses ready?"

"At five o'clock," replied the count.

"I beg your excellency's pardon," interposed the steward, in a deprecating manner, "for venturing to observe that it is already two o'clock."

"I am perfectly aware of that fact," answered Monte-Cristo calmly. Then, turning towards Ali, he said, "Let all the horses in my stables be led before the windows of your young lady, that she may select those she prefers for her carriage. Request her, also, to oblige me by saying whether it is her pleasure to dine with me; if so, let dinner be served in her apartments. Now leave me, and desire my valet-de-chambre to come hither."

Scarcely had Ali disappeared than the valet entered the chamber.

"M. Baptistin," said the count, "you have been in my service one year—the time I generally give myself to judge of the merits or demerits of those about me. You suit me very well."

Baptistin bowed low.

"It only remains for me to know whether I also suit you?"

"Oh, M. le Comte!" exclaimed Baptistin eagerly.

"Listen, if you please, till I have finished speaking," replied Monte-Cristo. "You receive 1,500 francs per annum for your services here, more than many a brave subaltern, who continually risks his life for his country, obtains. You live in a manner far superior to many clerks and placemen who work ten times harder than you do for their money, and certainly are quite as faithful in the discharge of their duties as you may be. Then, though yourself a servant, you have other servants to wait upon you, take care of your clothes, and see that your linen is duly prepared for you. Again, you make a profit upon each article you purchase for my toilet,

amounting in the course of a year to a sum equalling your wages."

"Nay, indeed, your excellency!"

"Do not interrupt me, M. Baptistin. I am not entering into these particulars with a view to complain or reproach you; on the contrary, I see nothing unfair or unreasonable in all I have enumerated. But let your notions of gain end with the advantages you have hitherto possessed. If, then, I should learn that you had taken upon yourself to speak of me to any one favourably or unfavourably, to comment on my actions, or watch my conduct, that very instant you would quit my service. You may now retire. I never caution my servants a second time; remember that. You have been duly admonished, and if the warning is given in vain you will have nobody to blame but yourself."

Again Baptistin bowed reverentially, and was proceeding towards the door when the count bade him stay.

"I forgot to mention to you," said he, "I lay yearly aside a certain sum for each servant in my establishment; those whom I am compelled to dismiss lose (as a matter of course) all participation in this money, while their portion goes to the fund accumulating for those domestics who remain with me, and among whom it will be divided at my death. You have been in my service a year—your fortune has commenced; do not prevent its full accomplishment by your own folly."

This address, delivered in the presence of Ali, who, not understanding one word of the language in which it was spoken, stood wholly unmoved, produced an effect on M. Baptistin only to be conceived by such as have occasion to study the character and disposition of French domestics.

The count then motioned the valet-de-chambre to retire, and to Ali to follow himself into his study, where they conversed long and earnestly together.

As the hand of the pendule pointed to five o'clock the count struck thrice upon his gong. When Ali was

wanted one stroke was given, two summoned Baptistin, and three Bertuccio.

The steward entered.

"My horses?" said Monte-Cristo.

"They are at the door harnessed to the carriage as your excellency desired. Does M. le Comte wish me to accompany him?"

"No; the coachman, Ali, and Baptistin will be sufficient without you."

The count descended to the door of his mansion, and beheld his carriage drawn by the very pair of horses he had so much admired in the morning as the property of Danglars. As he passed them he said,—

"They are extremely handsome certainly, and you have done well to purchase them, although you were somewhat remiss not to have procured them sooner."

"Indeed, your excellency, I had very considerable difficulty in obtaining them, and, as it is, they have cost an enormous price."

"Does the sum you gave for them make the animals less beautiful?" inquired the count, shrugging his shoulders.

"Nay, if your excellency is satisfied, all is as I could wish it. Whither does M. le Comte desire to be driven?"

"To the residence of M. le Baron Danglars, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin."

This conversation had passed as they stood upon the terrace from which a flight of stone steps led to the carriage drive. As Bertuccio, with a respectful bow, was moving away, the count called him back.

"I have another commission for you, M. Bertuccio," said he. "I am desirous of having an estate by the seaside in Normandy—for instance, between Havre and Boulogne. You see I give you a wide range. It will be absolutely necessary that the place you may select have a small harbour, creek, or bay into which my vessel can enter and remain at anchor. She merely draws fifteen feet of water. She must be kept in constant

readiness to sail immediately I think proper to give the signal. Make the requisite inquiries for a place of this description, and when you have met with an eligible spot, visit it, and if it possess the advantages desired, purchase it at once in your own name. The corvette must now, I think, be on her way to Fécamp, must she not?"

"Certainly, your excellency. I saw her put to sea the same evening we quitted Marseilles."

"And the yacht?"

"Was ordered to remain at Martigues."

"'Tis well! I wish you to write from time to time to the captains in charge of the two vessels, so as to keep them on the alert."

"And the steamboat? Has your excellency any orders to give respecting her?"

"She is at Chalons, is she not?"

"She is, my lord."

"The directions I gave you for the other two vessels may suffice for the steamboat also."

"I understand, my lord, and will punctually fulfil your commands."

"When you have purchased the estate I desire, I mean to establish constant relays of horses at ten leagues' distance one from the other along the northern and southern road."

"Your excellency may fully depend upon my zeal and fidelity in all things."

The count gave an approving smile, descended the terrace steps, and sprang into his carriage, which, drawn by the beautiful animals so expensively purchased, was whirled along with incredible swiftness, and stopped only before the hotel of the banker.

Danglars was engaged at that moment presiding over a railroad committee, but the meeting was nearly concluded when the name of his visitor was announced.

He found the count standing before some copies of Albano and Fattore that had been passed off to the

banker as originals; but which, copies of the paintings of those great masters as they were, seemed to feel their degradation in being brought into juxtaposition with the gaudy gilding that covered the ceiling.

The count turned round as he heard the entrance of Danglars into the room.

With a slight inclination of the head, Danglars signed to the count to be seated, pointing significantly to a gilded armchair, covered with white satin embroidered with gold.

The count obeyed.

"I have the honour, I presume, of addressing M. de Monte-Cristo."

The count bowed.

"And I of speaking to Baron Danglars, Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, and Member of the Chamber of Deputies?"

With an air of extreme gravity Monte-Cristo slowly enumerated the various titles engraved on the card left at his hôtel by the baron.

Danglars felt all the irony contained in the address of his visitor. For a minute or two he compressed his lips as though seeking to conquer his rage ere he trusted himself to speak. Then turning to his visitor he said,—

"You will, I trust, excuse my not having called you by your title when I first addressed you, but you are aware we are living under a popular form of government, and that I am myself a representative of the liberties of the people."

"So much so," replied Monte-Cristo, "that while preserving the habit of styling yourself baron, you have deemed it advisable to lay aside that of calling others by their titles."

"Upon my word," said Danglars, with affected carelessness, "I attach no sort of value to such empty distinctions; but the fact is, I was made baron, and also Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, in consequence of some services I had rendered government, but——"

"You have abdicated your titles after the example

set you by Messrs. de Montmorency and Lafayette? Well, you cannot possibly choose more noble models for your conduct!"

"Why," replied Danglars, "I do not mean to say I have altogether laid aside my titles. With the servants, for instance—there I think it right to preserve my rank with all its outward forms."

"I see; by your domestics you are 'My lord,' 'M. le Baron;' the journalists of the day style you 'Monsieur;' while your constituents term you 'Citizen.'"

Again Danglars bit his lips with baffled spite. He saw well enough that he was no match for Monte-Cristo in an argument of this sort, and he therefore hastened to turn to subjects more familiar to him, and calculated on having all the advantages on his side.

"Permit me to inform you, M. le Comte," said he, bowing, "that I have received a letter of advice from Thomson and French of Rome."

"I am glad to hear it, M. le Baron, for I must claim the privilege of so addressing you as well as your servants. I have acquired the bad habit of calling persons by their style and title from living in a country where barons are still met with, simply because persons are never suddenly elevated to a rank which is possessed only in right of ancestry. But as regards the letter of advice, I am charmed to find it has reached you; that will spare me the troublesome and disagreeable task of coming to you for money myself. You have received a regular letter of advice, therefore my cheques will be duly honoured, and we shall neither of us have to go out of our way in the transaction."

"There is one slight difficulty," said Danglars, "and that consists in my not precisely comprehending the letter itself."

"Indeed?"

"And for that reason I did myself the honour of calling upon you in order to beg you would explain some part of it to me."

"With much pleasure. Pray, now I am here, let me know what baffled your powers of comprehension."

"Why," said Danglars, "in the letter—I believe I have it about me"—(here he felt in his breast-pocket)—"yes, here it is! Well, this letter gives M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo unlimited credit on our house."

"And what is there that requires explaining in that simple fact, may I ask, M. le Baron?"

"Merely the term *unlimited*—nothing else, certainly."

"Is not that word known in France? Perhaps, indeed, it does not belong to the language; for the persons from whom you received your letter of advice are a species of Anglo-Germans, and very probably do not write very choice or accurate French."

"Oh, as for the composition of the letter, there is not the smallest error in it; but as regards the competency of the document, I certainly have doubts."

"Is it possible?" asked the count, assuming an air and tone of the utmost simplicity and candour—"is it possible that Thomson and French are not looked upon as safe and solvent bankers? Pray tell me what you think, M. le Baron, for I feel uneasy, I can assure you, having some considerable property in their hands."

"Thomson and French are bankers of the highest repute," replied Danglars, with an almost mocking smile; "and it was not of their solvency or capability I spoke, but of the word *unlimited*, which, in financial affairs, is so extremely vague a term—that—that——"

"In fact," said Monte-Cristo, "that its sense is also without limitations."

"Precisely what I was about to say," cried Danglars. "Now, what is vague is doubtful; and, says the wise man, 'Where there is doubt there is danger.'"

"Meaning to say," rejoined Monte-Cristo, "that however Thomson and French may be inclined to commit acts of imprudence and folly, M. le Baron Danglars is not disposed to follow their example."

"How so, M. le Comte?"

"Simply thus: the banking house of Thomson and Co. set no bounds to their engagements, while that of M. Danglars has its limits. Truly he is wise as the sage whose prudent apophthegm he quoted but just now"

"Monsieur," replied the banker, drawing himself up with a haughty air, "the amount of my capital, or the extent and solvency of my engagements, have never yet been questioned."

"It seems, then, reserved for me," said Monte-Cristo coldly, "to be the first to do so."

"And by what right, sir?"

"By right of the objections you have raised, and the explanations you have demanded, which certainly imply considerable distrust on your part, either of yourself or me—the former, most probably."

Again did Danglars, by a forcible effort, restrain himself from betraying the vindictive passions which possessed his mind at this second defeat by an adversary who calmly fought him with his own weapons.

"Well, sir," resumed Danglars, after a brief silence, "I will endeavour to make myself understood by requesting you to inform me for what sum you propose to draw upon me."

"Why, truly," replied Monte-Cristo, determined not to lose an inch of the ground he had gained, "my reason for desiring an 'unlimited' credit was precisely because I did not know what money I might expend."

The banker now thought it his turn to show off, and make a display of wealth and consequence. Flinging himself back therefore in his arm-chair, he said, with an arrogant and purse-proud air,—

"Let me beg of you not to hesitate in naming your wishes; you will then be convinced that the resources of the house of Danglars, however limited, are still equal to meeting the largest demands; and were you even to require a million——"

"I beg your pardon!" interposed Monte-Cristo.

"I observed," replied Danglars, with a patronizing

and pompous air, "that should you be hard pressed, the concern of which I am the head would not scruple to accommodate you to the amount of a million."

"A million!" retorted the count; "and what use can you possibly suppose so pitiful a sum would be to me? My dear sir, if a trifle like that could suffice me, I should never have given myself the trouble of opening an account for so contemptible an amount. A million! Excuse my smiling when you speak of a sum I am in the habit of carrying in my pocket-book or dressing-case."

And with these words Monte-Cristo took from his pocket a small case containing his visiting cards, and drew forth two orders on the treasury for 500,000 francs each, payable at sight to the bearer.

A man like Danglars was wholly inaccessible to any gentler method of correction. His upstart arrogance, his ostentatious vulgarity, were only assailable by blows dealt with the force and vigour of the present *coup*. Its effect on the banker was perfectly stunning; and as though scarcely venturing to credit his senses, he continued gazing from the paper to the count with a confused and mystified air.

"Come, come," said Monte-Cristo, "confess honestly that you have not perfect confidence in the responsibility of the house of Thomson and French. There is nothing very strange in your exercising what seems to you a necessary caution; however, foreseeing that such might be the case, I determined, spite of my ignorance in such matters, to be provided with the means of banishing all scruples from your mind, and at the same time leaving you quite at liberty to act as you pleased in the affair. See, here are two similar letters to that you have yourself received—the one from the house of Arstein and Eskeles of Vienna to Baron de Rothschild, the other drawn from Baring of London to M. Laffitte. Now, sir, you have but to say the word, and I will spare you all uneasiness and alarm on the subject, by presenting

my letter of credit at one or other of the establishments I have named."

The blow had struck home, and Danglars was entirely vanquished. With a trembling hand he took the two letters from Vienna and London from the count, who held them carelessly between his finger and thumb, as though to him they were mere every-day matters to which he attached but very little interest.

"Well, sir," said Danglars, rising, after he had well convinced himself of the authenticity of the documents he held, and bowing, as though in adoration of a man, the thrice happy possessor of as many orders for unlimited credit on the three principal banks of Paris, "you have there signatures worth untold wealth. Although your conversation and vouchers put an end to all mistrust in the affair, you must pardon me, M. le Comte, for confessing the most extreme astonishment."

"Nay, nay," answered Monte-Cristo, with the easiest and most gentlemanly air imaginable, "'tis not for such trifling sums as these to startle or astonish the banking house of M. le Baron Danglars. Then, as all is settled as to forms between us, I will thank you to send a supply of money to me to-morrow."

"By all means, M. le Comte. What sum do you want?"

"Why," replied Monte-Cristo, "since we mutually understand each other—for such I presume is the case?"

Danglars bowed assentingly.

"You are quite sure that not a lurking doubt or suspicion lingers in your mind?"

"O M. le Comte!" exclaimed Danglars, "I never for an instant entertained such a feeling towards you."

"No, no; you merely wished to be convinced you ran no risk—nothing more. But now that we have come to so clear an understanding, and that all distrust and suspicion are laid at rest, we may as well fix a sum as the probable expenditure of the first year. Suppose we say six millions to——"

"Six millions!" gasped out Danglars, "certainly, whatever you please."

"Then if I should require more," continued Monte-Cristo, in a careless and indifferent manner, "why, of course, I should draw upon you; but my present intention is not to remain in France more than a year, and during that period I scarcely think I shall exceed the sum I mentioned. However, we shall see."

"The money you desire shall be at your house by ten o'clock to-morrow morning, M. le Comte," replied Danglars. "How would you like to have it—in gold, silver, or notes?"

"Half in gold, and the other half in banknotes, if you please," said the count, rising from his seat.

"I must confess to you, M. le Comte," said Danglars, "that I have hitherto imagined myself acquainted with the degree of fortune possessed by all the rich individuals of Europe, and still wealth such as yours has been wholly unknown to me. May I presume to ask whether you have long possessed it?"

"It has been in the family a very long while," returned Monte-Cristo, "a sort of treasure expressly forbidden to be touched for a certain period of years, during which the accumulated interest has doubled the capital. The period appointed by the testator for the disposal of these riches occurred only a short time ago; and they have only been employed by me within the last few years. Your ignorance on the subject, therefore, is easily accounted for. However, you will be better informed as to me and my possessions ere long."

And the count, while pronouncing these latter words, accompanied them with one of those ghastly smiles that used to strike terror into poor Franz d'Epinay.

"I propose myself the pleasure," said the Baron, "(if perfectly agreeable to you) of introducing you to Madame la Baronne Danglars. Excuse my impatience, M. le Comte, but a person of your wealth and influence cannot receive too much attention."

Monte-Cristo bowed, in sign that he accepted the proffered honour, and the financier immediately rang a small bell, which was answered by a servant in a showy livery.

"Is Madame la Baronne at home?" inquired Danglars.

"Yes, M. le Baron," answered the man.

"And alone?"

"No, M. le Baron; madame has visitors."

"Have you any objection to meet any persons who may be with madame, or do you desire to preserve a strict incognito?"

"No, indeed," replied Monte-Cristo, with a smile, "I do not arrogate to myself the right of so doing."

"And who is with madame?—M. Debray?" inquired Danglars, with an air of indulgence and good nature that made Monte-Cristo smile, acquainted as he was with the secrets of the banker's domestic life.

"Yes, M. le Baron," replied the servant, "M. Debray is with madame."

Danglars nodded his head; then, turning to Monte-Cristo, said, "M. Lucien Debray is an old friend of ours, and private secretary to the Ministre de l'Intérieur. As for my wife, I must tell you she lowered herself by marrying me, for she belongs to one of the most ancient families in France. Her maiden name was De Servières, and her first husband was M. le Colonel Marquis de Nargonne."

"I have not the honour of knowing Madame Danglars, but I have already met M. Lucien Debray."

"Ah, indeed!" said Danglars, "and where was that?"

"At the house of M. de Morcerf."

"Oh, what! you are acquainted with the young viscount, are you?"

"We were together a good deal during the Carnival at Rome."

"True, true!" cried Danglars. "Let me see; have I not heard talk of some strange adventure with bandits or thieves hid in ruins, and of his having had a miracu-

lous escape? I forget how, but I know he used to amuse my wife and daughter by telling them about it after his return from Italy."

"Madame la Baronne is waiting to receive you, gentlemen," said the servant, who had gone to inquire the pleasure of his mistress.

"With your permission," said Danglars, bowing, "I will precede you to show you the way."

"By all means," replied Monte-Cristo. "I follow you."

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE DAPPLED GRAYS.

The baron, followed by the count, traversed a long suite of apartments, in which the prevailing characteristics were heavy magnificence and the gaudiness of ostentatious wealth, until he reached the boudoir of Madame Danglars, a small octagonal-shaped room, hung with pink satin covered with white Indian muslin; the chairs were of ancient workmanship and materials; over the doors were painted sketches of shepherds and shepherdesses after the style and manner of Boucher; and at each side pretty medallions in crayons, harmonizing well with the fittings-up of this charming apartment, the only one throughout the vast hôtel in which any distinctive taste prevailed.

As Danglars now entered he found Madame la Baronne (who, although past the first bloom of youth, was still strikingly handsome) seated at the piano, a most elaborate piece of cabinet and inlaid work, while Lucien Debray, standing before a small work-table, was turning over the pages of an album. Lucien had found time, preparatory to the count's arrival, to relate many particulars respecting him to Madame Danglars. Already excited by the wonderful stories related of the count by De Morcerf,

it is no wonder that Madame Danglars eagerly listened to, and fully credited all the additional circumstances detailed by Debray.

"Baroness," said Danglars, "give me leave to present to you the Count of Monte-Cristo, who has been most warmly recommended to me by my correspondents at Rome. I need but mention one fact to make all the ladies in Paris court his notice, and that is that the noble individual before you has come to take up his abode in our fine capital for one year, during which brief period he proposes to spend six millions of money; think of that! It sounds very much like an announcement of balls, fêtes, dinners, and picnic parties, in all of which I trust M. le Comte will remember us, as he may depend upon it we shall him, in all the entertainments we may give, be they great or small."

Spite of the gross flattery and coarseness of this address, Madame Danglars could not forbear gazing with considerable interest on a man capable of expending six millions in twelve months, and who had selected Paris for the scene of his princely extravagance.

"And when did you arrive here?" inquired she.

"Yesterday morning, madame."

"Coming, as usual, I presume, from the extreme end of the globe? Pardon me—at least such I have heard is your custom."

"Nay, madame; this time I have merely proceeded from Cadiz hither."

"You have selected a most unfavourable moment for your first visit to our city. Paris is a horrible place in summer! Balls, parties, and fêtes are over; the Italian opera is in London, the French opera everywhere except at Paris. As for the Théâtre Français, you know, of course, that it is nowhere; the only amusements left us are the indifferent races held in the Champ de Mars and Satory. Do you propose entering any horses at either of these races, M. le Comte?"

"I assure you, madame," replied Monte-Cristo, "my

present intentions are to do whatever will tend to render my sojourn in Paris most agreeable to myself and others. I only pray, I may find some kind, pitying friend who will commiserate my lamentable ignorance of such matters, and instruct me rightly to understand the habits and etiquette of this polished city."

"Are you fond of horses, Monsieur le Comte?"

"I have passed a considerable part of my life in the East, madame; and you are doubtless aware that the inhabitants of those climes value only two things—the fine breeding of their horses and the beauty of their females."

"Nay, M. le Comte!" said the baroness, "it would have been somewhat more gallant to have placed the ladies before the animals."

"You see, madame, how rightly I spoke when I said I required a preceptor to guide me in all my sayings and doings here."

At this instant the favourite attendant of Madame Danglars entered the boudoir; approaching her mistress, she spoke some words in an undertone. Madame Danglars turned very pale, then exclaimed,—

"I cannot believe it; the thing is impossible!"

"I assure you, madame," replied the woman, "it is even as I have said."

Turning impatiently towards her husband, Madame Danglars demanded,—

"Is this true?"

"Is what true, madame?" inquired Danglars, visibly agitated.

"What my maid tells me."

"But what does she tell you?"

"That when my coachman was about to prepare my carriage, he discovered that the horses had been removed from the stables without his knowledge. I desire to know what is the meaning of this?"

"Be kind enough, madame, to listen to me," said Danglars.

"Fear not my listening—ay, and attentively, too; for, in truth, I am most curious to hear what explanation you purpose offering for conduct so unparalleled. These two gentlemen shall decide between us; but, first, I will state the case to them. Gentlemen," continued the baroness, "among the ten horses in the stables of M. le Baron Danglars are two that belong exclusively to me—a pair of the handsomest and most spirited creatures to be found in Paris. But to you, at least, M. Debray, I need not give a further description, because to you my beautiful pair of dappled grays were well known. Well, I had promised Madame de Villefort the loan of my carriage to drive to-morrow to the Bois de Boulogne; but when my coachman goes to fetch the grays from the stables, they are gone—positively gone. No doubt, M. Danglars has sacrificed them to the selfish consideration of gaining some thousands of paltry francs. Oh, how I hate and detest that money-grasping nature! Heaven defend me from all the race of mercenary speculators!"

"Madame," replied Danglars, "the horses were not sufficiently quiet for you. They were scarcely four years old, and they made me extremely uneasy on your account."

"Nonsense," retorted the baroness; "you could not have entertained any alarm on the subject, because you are perfectly well aware that I have recently engaged a coachman who is said to be the best in Paris. But, perhaps you have disposed of the coachman as well as the horses?"

"My dear love, pray do not say any more about them, and I promise you another pair exactly like them in appearance, only more quiet and steady."

The baroness shrugged up her shoulders with an air of ineffable contempt, while her husband, affecting not to observe it, turned towards Monte-Cristo, and said,—

"Upon my word, M. le Comte, I am quite sorry I was not sooner aware of your establishing yourself in Paris."

"And wherefore?" asked the count.

"Because I should have liked to have made you the offer of these horses. I have almost given them away, as it is; but, as I before said, I was anxious to get rid of them upon any terms. They were only fit for a young man, not at all calculated for a person of my time of life."

"I am much obliged by your kind intentions towards me," said Monte-Cristo; "but this morning I purchased a very excellent pair of carriage horses, and I do not think they were dear. There they are! Come, M. Debray, you are a connoisseur, I believe; let me have your opinion upon them."

As Debray walked towards the window, Danglars approached his wife.

"I could not tell you before others," said he, in a low tone, "the reason of my parting with the horses; but a most enormous price was offered me this morning for them. Some madman or fool, bent upon ruining himself as fast as he can, actually sent his steward to me to purchase them at any cost; and the fact is, I have gained 16,000 francs by the sale of them. Come, don't look so angry, and you shall have 4,000 francs of the money to do what you like with, and Eugénie shall have 2,000. There, what do you think now of the affair? Wasn't I right to part with the horses?"

Madame Danglars surveyed her husband with a look of withering contempt.

"What do I see?" suddenly exclaimed Debray.

"Where?" asked the baroness.

"I cannot be mistaken, there are your horses! The very animals we were speaking of harnessed to the count's carriage!"

"My dear beautiful dappled grays?" demanded the baroness, springing to the window. "'Tis indeed they!" said she.

Danglars looked absolutely stultified.

"How very singular!" cried Monte-Cristo, with well-feigned astonishment.

Madame Danglars whispered a few words in the ear

of Debray, who approached Monte-Cristo, saying, "The baroness wishes to know what you paid her husband for the horses."

"I scarcely know," replied the count; "it was a little surprise prepared for me by my steward. He knew how desirous I was of meeting with precisely such a pair of horses, and—so he bought them. I think, if I remember rightly, he hinted that he had given somewhere about 30,000 francs."

Debray conveyed the count's reply to the baroness.

Poor Danglars looked so crestfallen and discomfited that Monte-Cristo assumed a pitying air towards him.

"See," said the count, "how very ungrateful women are! Your kind attention, in providing for the safety of the baroness by disposing of the horses does not seem to have made the least impression on her. But so it is; a woman will often, from mere wilfulness, prefer that which is dangerous to that which is safe."

Danglars made no reply; he was occupied in anticipations of the coming scene between himself and the baroness, whose threatening looks and frowning brow, like that of Olympic Jove, predicted a fearful storm.

Debray, who perceived the gathering clouds, and felt no desire to witness the explosion of Madame Danglar's rage, suddenly recollected an appointment which compelled him to take his leave; while Monte-Cristo, unwilling to destroy the advantages he hoped to obtain by prolonging his stay, made a farewell bow and departed, leaving Danglars to endure the angry reproaches of his wife.

Two hours afterwards, Madame Danglars received a most flattering epistle from the count, in which he entreated her to receive back her favourite "dappled grays," protesting that he could not endure the idea of making his *début* in the Parisian world of fashion with the knowledge that his splendid equipage had been obtained at the price of a lovely woman's regrets. The horses were sent back wearing the same harness they had

done in the morning; the only difference consisted in the rosettes worn on the heads of the animals being adorned with a large diamond placed in the centre of each, by order of the count.

To Danglars Monte-Cristo also wrote, requesting him to excuse the whimsical gift of a capricious millionaire, and to beg of Madame la Baronne to pardon the Eastern fashion adopted in the return of the horses.

During the evening Monte-Cristo quitted Paris for Auteuil, accompanied by Ali.

The following day, about three o'clock, a single blow struck on the gong summoned Ali to the presence of the count.

"Ali," observed his master, as the Nubian entered the chamber, "you have frequently explained to me how more than commonly skilful you are in throwing the lasso, have you not?"

Ali drew himself up proudly, and then returned a sign in the affirmative.

"I thought I did not mistake. With your lasso you could stop an ox?"

Again Ali repeated his affirmative gesture.

"Or a tiger?"

Ali bowed his head in token of assent.

"A lion even?"

Ali sprang forwards, imitating the action of one throwing the lasso, then of a strangled lion.

"I understand," said Monte-Cristo; "you wish to tell me you have hunted the lion?"

Ali smiled, with triumphant pride, as he signified that he had indeed both chased and captured many lions.

"But do you believe you could arrest the progress of two horses rushing forwards with ungovernable fury?"

The Nubian smiled.

"It is well," said Monte-Cristo. "Then listen to me. Ere long a carriage will dash past here, drawn by the pair of dappled gray horses you saw me with yesterday;

now, at the risk of your own life, you must manage to stop those horses before my door."

Ali descended to the street, and marked a straight line on the pavement immediately at the entrance of the house, and then pointed out the line he had traced to the count, who was watching him. The count patted him gently on the back—his usual mode of praising Ali—who, pleased and gratified with the commission assigned him, walked calmly towards a projecting stone forming the angle of the street and house, and, seating himself thereon, began to smoke his chibouque, while Monte-Cristo re-entered his dwelling, perfectly assured of the success of his plan. Still, as five o'clock approached, and the carriage was momentarily expected by the count, the indication of more than common impatience and uneasiness might be observed in his manner. He stationed himself in a room commanding a view of the street, pacing the chamber with restless steps, stopping merely to listen from time to time for the sound of approaching wheels, then to cast an anxious glance on Ali; but the regularity with which the Nubian puffed forth the smoke of his chibouque proved that he at least was wholly absorbed in the enjoyment of his favourite occupation. Suddenly a distant sound of rapidly advancing wheels was heard, and almost immediately a carriage appeared, drawn by a pair of wild, ungovernable horses, which rushed forward as though urged by the fiend himself, while the terrified coachman strove in vain to restrain their furious speed.

In the vehicle was a female, apparently young, and a child of about seven or eight years of age. Terror seemed to have deprived them even of the power of uttering a cry, and both were clasped in each other's arms, as though determined not to be parted by death itself. The carriage creaked and rattled as it flew over the rough stones; and had it encountered the slightest impediment to its progress it must inevitably have upset; but it still flew on, and the cries of the affrighted

spectators testified the universal sense of the imminent peril its occupants were threatened with.

Then Ali knew the right moment was come; and, throwing down his chibouque, he drew the lasso from his pocket, threw it so skilfully as to catch the forelegs of the near horse in its triple fold, suffered himself to be dragged on for a few steps, by which time the tightening of the well-cast lasso had so completely hampered the furious animal as to bring it to the ground, and falling on the pole, it snapped, and therefore prevented the other animal from pursuing its headlong way. Gladly availing himself of this opportunity, the coachman leaped from his box; but Ali had promptly seized the nostrils of the second horse, and held them in his iron grasp, till the maddened beast, snorting with pain, sank beside his companion. All this was achieved in much less time than is occupied in the recital. The brief space had, however, been sufficient for an individual, followed by a number of servants, to rush from the house before which the accident had occurred, and, as the coachman opened the door of the carriage, to take from it a lady who was convulsively grasping the cushions with one hand, while with the other she pressed to her bosom her young companion, who had lost all consciousness of what was passing.

Monte-Cristo carried them both to the salon, and deposited them on a sofa.

"Compose yourself, madame," said he; "all danger is over."

The female looked up at these words, and, with a glance far more expressive than any entreaties could have been, pointed to her child, who still continued insensible.

"I understand the nature of your alarms, madame," said the count, carefully examining the child, "but I assure you there is not the slightest occasion for uneasiness; your little charge has not received the least injury—his insensibility is merely the effects of terror, and will soon cease."

"Are you quite sure you do not say so to tranquillize my fears? See how deadly pale he is! My child, my darling Edward, speak to your mother; open your dear eyes and look on me once again! O sir, in pity send for help; my whole fortune shall not be thought too much for the recovery of my blessed boy."

With a calm smile and gentle wave of the hand, Monte-Cristo signed to the distracted mother to lay aside her apprehensions; then opening a casket that stood near, he drew forth a phial composed of Bohemian glass, containing a liquid of the colour of blood, of which he let fall a single drop on the child's lips. Scarcely had it reached them, ere the boy, though still pale as marble, opened his eyes, and eagerly gazed around him.

At this unhoped-for sight, the wild delight of the mother equalled her former despair.

"Where am I?" exclaimed she, when her first raptures at her son's recovery were past, "and to whom am I indebted for so happy a termination to my late dreadful alarm?"

"Madame," answered the count, "you are under the roof of one who esteems himself most fortunate in having been able to save you from a further continuance of your sufferings."

"My wretched curiosity has brought all this about," pursued the lady. "All Paris rang with the praises of Madame Danglars's beautiful horses, and I had the folly to desire to know whether they really merited the high character given of them."

"Is it possible," exclaimed the count, with well-feigned astonishment, "that these horses belong to Madame la Baronne?"

"They do, indeed. May I inquire if you are acquainted with Madame Danglars?"

"I have that honour; and my happiness at your escape from the danger that threatened you is redoubled by the consciousness that I have been the unwilling and unintentional cause of all the peril you have in-

curred. I yesterday purchased these horses of the baron; but as the baroness evidently regretted parting with them, I ventured to send them back to her, with a request that she would gratify me by accepting them from my hands."

"You are then, doubtless, the Count of Monte-Cristo of whom Hermine has talked to me so much?"

"You have rightly guessed, madame," replied the count.

"And I am Madame Héloïse de Villefort."

The count bowed with the air of a person who hears a name for the first time.

"How grateful will M. de Villefort be for all your goodness! How thankfully will he acknowledge that to you alone it is owing that his wife and child exist! Most certainly but for the prompt assistance of your intrepid servant, this dear child and myself must both have perished."

"Indeed, I still shudder at the recollection of the fearful danger you were placed in, as well as your interesting child."

"I trust you will not object to my offering a recompense to your noble-hearted servant, proportionate to the service he has rendered me and mine."

"I beseech you, madame," replied Monte-Cristo, "not to spoil Ali, either by too great praise or rewards. I cannot allow him to acquire the habit of expecting to be recompensed for every trifling service he may render. Ali is my slave, and in saving your life he was but discharging his duty to me."

"Nay," interposed Madame de Villefort, on whom the authoritative style adopted by the count made a deep impression—"nay, but consider that to preserve my life he has risked his own."

"His life, madame, belongs not to him; it is mine, in return for my having myself saved him from death."

Madame de Villefort made no further reply; her mind was utterly absorbed in the contemplation of the singular

individual, who, from the first instant of her beholding him, had made so powerful an impression on her.

During the evident preoccupation of Madame de Villefort, Monte-Cristo scrutinized the features and appearance of the boy she kept folded in her arms, lavishing on him the most tender endearments. The child was small for his age, and unnaturally pale. A mass of straight black hair, defying all attempts to train or curl it, fell over his projecting forehead, and hung down to his shoulders, giving increased vivacity to eyes already sparkling with a youthful love of mischief and fondness for every forbidden enjoyment. His mouth was large, and the lips, which had not yet regained their colour, were particularly thin; in fact, the deep and crafty look, forming the principal character of the child's face, belonged rather to a boy of twelve or fourteen years of age than to one so young. His first movement was to free himself by a violent push from the encircling arms of his mother, and to rush forwards to the casket from whence the count had taken the phial of elixir, then, without asking permission of any one, he proceeded, in all the wilfulness of a spoiled child unaccustomed to restrain either whims or caprices, to pull the corks out of all the bottles in the casket.

"Touch nothing, my little friend," cried the count eagerly; "some of those liquids are not only dangerous to taste, but even to smell."

Madame de Villefort became very pale, and seizing her son's arm drew him anxiously towards her; but once satisfied of his safety, she also cast a brief but expressive glance on the casket, which was not lost upon the count. At this moment Ali entered. At sight of him Madame de Villefort uttered an expression of pleasure, and holding the child still closer towards her, she said,—

"Edward, dearest, do you see that good man? He has shown very great courage and resolution, for he exposed his own life to stop the horses that were running

away with us and would certainly have dashed the carriage to pieces ere long. Thank him, then, my child, in your very best manner, for had he not come to our aid, neither you nor I would have been alive to speak our thanks."

This address, however, excited no similar feeling of gratitude on the part of the child, who, instead of obeying his mother's directions, stuck out his lips and turned away his head in a disdainful and contemptuous manner, saying,—

"I don't like him—he's too ugly for me!"

The count witnessed all this with internal satisfaction, and a smile stole over his features as he thought that such a child bade fair to realise one part of his hopes; while Madame de Villefort reprimanded her son with a gentleness and moderation very far from conveying the least idea of a fault having been committed.

"This lady," said the count, speaking to Ali in the Arabic language, "is desirous that her son should thank you for saving both their lives, but the boy refuses, saying, 'You are too ugly!'"

Ali turned his intelligent countenance towards the boy, on whom he gazed without any apparent emotion, but the sort of spasmodic working of the nostrils showed to the practised eye of Monte-Cristo how deeply the Arab was wounded by the unfeeling remark.

"Will you permit me to inquire," said Madame de Villefort, as she rose to take her leave, "whether you usually reside here?"

"No, I do not," replied Monte-Cristo; "it is a small place I have purchased quite lately. My place of abode is No. 30 Avenue des Champs Elysées; but I am delighted to see your countenance seems expressive of a perfect return to tranquillity. You have quite recovered from your fright, and are, no doubt, desirous of returning home. Anticipating your wishes, I have desired the same horses you came with to be put to one of my carriages, and Ali, he whom you think so very

ugly," continued he, addressing the boy with a smili air, "will have the honour of driving you home wh your coachman remains here to attend to the necessa repairs of your calèche. Directly that important busin is concluded, I will have a couple of my own hors harnessed to convey it direct to Madame Danglars."

"I dare not return with those dreadful horses," sa Madame de Villefort.

"You will see," replied Monte-Cristo, "that they w be as different as possible in the hands of Ali. Wi him they will be gentle and docile as lambs."

Ali had indeed given proof of this; for, approachin the animals, who had been got upon their legs wi considerable difficulty, he rubbed their foreheads an nostrils with a sponge soaked in aromatic vinegar, an wiped off the sweat and foam that covered their mouth Then, commencing a loud whistling noise, he rubbe them well all over their bodies for several minutes and, undisturbed by the noisy crowd collected roun the broken carriage, Ali quietly harnessed the pacific animals to the count's chariot, took the reins in h hands, and mounted the box, when, lo! to the utte astonishment of those who had witnessed the ungovern able spirit and maddened velocity of the same horse he was actually compelled to apply his whip in no ver gentle manner ere he could induce them to start, an even then all that could be obtained from the celebrate "dappled grays," now changed into a couple of as dul sluggish, stupid brutes as "the most timid driver would desire to meet with, was a slow, pottering pac kept up with so much difficulty that Madame de Villefor was more than a couple of hours returning to her resi dence in the Faubourg St. Honoré.

Nothing was talked of throughout the evening but th adventure at Auteuil. Albert related it to his mother Château-Renaud recounted it at the Jockey Club, and Debray detailed it at length in the salons of the minister even Beauchamp accorded twenty lines in his journal to

he relation of the count's courage and gallantry, thereby placing him as the greatest hero of the day before the eyes of all the fair members of the aristocracy of France. Vast was the crowd of visitors and inquiring friends who left their names at the hôtel of Madame de Villefort, with the design of renewing their visit at the right moment and of hearing from her lips all the interesting circumstances of this most romantic adventure. As Héloïse had stated, M. de Villefort donned his best black suit, drew on a pair of new white kid gloves, ordered the servants to attend the carriage dressed in their full livery, and forthwith drove to the hôtel of the count, situated, as the reader is already informed, in the Avenue des Champs Elysées.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

IDEOLOGY.

If the Count of Monte-Cristo had lived for a very long time in Parisian society he would have fully appreciated the value of the step which M. de Villefort had taken. His drawing-room, regenerated by a young wife and a daughter by his first marriage scarcely eighteen, was still one of those well-regulated Paris salons where the worship of traditional customs and the observance of rigid etiquette were carefully maintained. A freezing politeness, a strict fidelity to government principles, a profound contempt for theories and theorists, a deep-seated hatred of ideality—these were the elements of private and public life displayed by M. de Villefort.

Ordinarily, M. de Villefort made and returned very few visits. His wife visited for him, and this was the received thing in the world, where they assigned to the heavy and multifarious occupations of the magistrate what was really only a calculation of pride, an offshoot

of aristocracy, in fact, the application of the axiom, "*Pretend to think well of yourself, and the world will think well of you,*" an axiom a hundred times more useful in our society than that of the Greeks, "*Know thyself,*" a knowledge for which, in our days, we have substituted the less difficult and more advantageous science of *knowing others.*

M. de Villefort had the reputation of being the least curious and least wearisome man in France. He gave a ball every year, at which he appeared for a quarter of an hour only—that is to say, five-and-forty minutes less than the king is visible at his balls. He was never seen at the theatres, at concerts, or in any place of public resort. Occasionally, but seldom, he played at whist, and then care was taken to select partners worthy of him; sometimes they were ambassadors, sometimes archbishops, or sometimes a prince, or a president, or some dowager duchess. Such was the man whose carriage had just now stopped before the Count of Monte-Cristo's door.

The valet-de-chambre announced M. de Villefort, at the moment when the count, leaning over a large table, was tracing on a map the route from St. Petersburg to China.

The procureur du roi entered with the same grave and measured step he would have employed in entering a court of justice. He was the same man, or rather the completion of the same man, whom we have heretofore seen as *substitut* at Marseilles. Nature, following up its principles, had changed nothing for him in the course he had chalked out for himself. From slender he had become meagre; from pale, yellow; his deep-set eyes were now hollow, and gold spectacles, as they shielded his eyes, seemed to make a portion of his face. All his costume was black, with the exception of his white cravat, and this funereal appearance was only broken in upon by the slight line of red ribbon which passed almost imperceptibly through his button-hole, and

which appeared like a streak of blood traced with a pencil.

Although master of himself, Monte-Cristo scrutinized with irrepressible curiosity the magistrate, whose salute he returned, and who, distrustful by habit, and especially incredulous as to social marvels, was much more disposed to see in the noble stranger, as Monte-Cristo was already called, a *chevalier d'industrie*, who had come to try new ground, or some malefactor who had broken his prescribed limits, than a prince of the Holy See, or a sultan of the "Arabian Nights."

"Sir," said Villefort, in the tone assumed by magistrates in their oratorical periods, and of which they cannot, or will not, divest themselves in society—"sir, the signal service which you yesterday rendered to my wife and son has made it a duty in me to offer you my thanks. Allow me, therefore, to discharge this duty, and express to you all my gratitude."

"Monsieur," replied the count, with a chilling air, "I am very happy to have been the means of preserving a son to his mother, for they say that the sentiment of maternity is the most holy of all; and the good fortune which occurred to me, monsieur, might have enabled you to dispense with a duty which, in its discharge, confers an undoubtedly great honour."

Villefort, astonished at this reply, which he by no means expected, started like a soldier who feels the blow levelled at him over the armour he wears, and a curl of his disdainful lip indicated that from that moment he noted in the tablets of his brain that the Count of Monte-Cristo was by no means a highly-bred gentleman. He glanced around in order to seize on something on which the conversation might turn and seem to fall easily. He saw the map which Monte-Cristo had been examining when he entered, and said,—

"You seem geographically engaged, sir? It is a rich study for you who, as I learn, have seen as many lands as are delineated on this map."

"Yes, sir," replied the count; "I have sought to make on the human race, taken as a mass, what you practise every day on individuals—a physiological study. But sit down, sir, I beg of you."

Monte-Cristo pointed to a chair, which the procureur du roi was obliged to take the trouble to move forwards himself, whilst the count merely fell back into his own, on which he had been kneeling when Villefort entered. Thus the count was half-way turned towards his visitor, having his back towards the window, his elbow resting on the geographical chart which afforded the conversation for the moment—a conversation which assumed, as had done those with Danglars and Morcerf, a turn analogous to the persons, if not to the situation.

"Ah, you philosophize," replied Villefort, after a moment's silence, during which, like a wrestler who encounters a powerful opponent, he took breath. "Well, sir, really, if, like you, I had nothing else to do, I should seek a more amusing occupation."

"Why, in truth, sir," was Monte-Cristo's reply, "man is but an ugly caterpillar for him who studies him through a solar microscope. But you said, I think, that I had nothing else to do. Now, really, let me ask, sir, have you? Do you believe you have anything to do? or, to speak in plain terms, do you really think that what you do deserves being called anything?"

Villefort's astonishment redoubled at this second thrust so forcibly made by his strange adversary. It was a long time since the magistrate had heard a paradox so strong, or rather, to say the truth more exactly, it was the first time he had ever heard it. The procureur du roi exerted himself to reply.

"Sir," he responded, "you are a stranger, and I believe you say yourself that a portion of your life has been spent in Oriental countries; thus, then, you are not aware how human justice, so expeditious in barbarous countries, takes with us a prudent and well-studied course."

"Oh, yes—yes I do, sir; it is the *pede claudo* of the ancients. I know all that, for it is with the justice of all countries especially that I have occupied myself; it is with the criminal procedure of all nations that I have compared natural justice, and I must say, sir, that it is the law of primitive nations—that is, the law of retaliation—that I have most frequently found to be according to the law of God."

"If this law were adopted, sir," said the procureur du roi, "it would greatly simplify our legal codes, and in that case the magistrates would not (as you have just observed) have much to do."

"It may, perhaps, come to this in time," observed Monte-Cristo. "You know that human inventions march from the complex to the simple, and simplicity is always perfection."

"In the meanwhile," continued the magistrate, "our codes are in full force with all their contradictory enactments derived from Gallic customs, Roman laws, and Frank usages—the knowledge of all which, you will agree, is not to be acquired without lengthened labour; and it requires a tedious study to acquire this knowledge, and when that is acquired, a strong power of brain is necessary in order to retain it."

"I agree with you entirely, sir; but all that even you know with respect to the French code, I know, not only in reference to that code, but as regards the codes of all nations."

"But with what motive have you learned all this?" inquired Villefort, astonished.

Monte-Cristo smiled.

"Really, sir," he observed, "I see that in spite of the reputation which you have acquired as a superior man, you contemplate everything in the material and vulgar view of society, beginning with man and ending with man."

"Pray, sir, explain yourself," said Villefort, more and more astonished. "I really do—not—understand you—perfectly."

"I say, sir, that with the eyes fixed on the social organization of nations, you see only the springs of the machine, and lose sight of the sublime workman who makes them act. I say that you do not recognize before you and around you any but those placemen whose brevets have been signed by the minister or the king; and that the men whom God has put above those titulars, ministers and kings, by giving them a mission to follow out instead of a post to fill—I say, that they escape your narrow, limited ken."

"Then," said Villefort, more and more amazed, and really supposing he was speaking to a mystic or a madman, "you consider yourself as one of those extraordinary beings whom you have mentioned?"

"And why not?" said Monte-Cristo coldly.

"Sir," said Villefort, "upon my word, you overcome me. I really never heard a person speak as you do."

"Because you remain eternally encircled in a round of general conditions, and have never dared to raise your wings into those upper spheres which God has peopled with invisible or marked beings."

"Then you yourself are one of these marked beings?"

"Yes, monsieur, I believe so; for until now, no man has found himself in a position similar to mine. The dominions of kings are limited, either by mountains, or rivers, or a change of manners, or an alteration of language. My kingdom is bounded only by the world, for I am neither an Italian, nor a Frenchman, nor a Hindu, nor an American, nor a Spaniard—I am a cosmopolite. No country can say it saw my birth. God alone knows what country will see me die. I adopt all customs, speak all languages. You believe me to be a Frenchman, for I speak French with the same facility and purity as yourself. Well, Ali, my Nubian, believes me to be an Arab; Bertuccio, my steward, takes me for a Roman; Haydée, my slave, thinks me a Greek. You may, therefore, comprehend, that being of no country, asking

no protection from any government, acknowledging no man as my brother, not one of the scruples that arrest the powerful or the obstacles which paralyze the weak paralyze or arrest me. I have only two adversaries—I will not say two conquerors, for with perseverance I subdue even them, though they are time and distance. There is a third, and the most terrible—that is my condition as a mortal being. This alone can stop me in my onward career, and before I have attained the goal at which I aim."

"But can you not say that, sir? for the moment you become an inhabitant of France you are naturally subjected to the French laws."

"I know it, sir," replied Monte-Cristo; "but when I visit a country I begin to study, by all the means which are available, the men from whom I may have anything to hope or to fear, until I know them as well, perhaps better, than they know themselves. It follows from this, that the procureur du roi, be he who he may, with whom I should have to deal would assuredly be more embarrassed than I should."

"That is to say," replied Villefort, with hesitation, "that human nature being weak, every man, according to your creed, has committed faults."

"Faults or crimes," responded Monte-Cristo, with a negligent air.

"And that you alone, amongst the men whom you do not recognize as your brothers—for you have said so," observed Villefort, in a tone that faltered somewhat—"you alone are perfect?"

"No, not perfect," was the count's reply, "only impenetrable, that's all. But let us leave off this strain, sir, if the tone of it is displeasing to you. I am no more disturbed by your justice than you are by my second sight."

"No, no, by no means," said Villefort, who was afraid of seeming to abandon his ground. "No; by your brilliant and almost sublime conversation you

have elevated me above the ordinary level; we no longer talk, we rise to dissertation. But you know how the theologians in their collegiate chairs, and philosophers in their controversies, occasionally say cruel truths. Let us suppose for the moment that we are theologizing in a social way, or even philosophically, and I will say to you, rude as it may seem, 'My brother, you sacrifice greatly to pride; you may be above others, but above you there is God.'"

"Above us all, sir," was Monte-Cristo's response, in a tone and with an emphasis so deep that Villefort involuntarily shuddered. "I have my pride for men—serpents always ready to erect themselves against every one who may pass without crushing them. But I lay aside that pride before God, who has taken me from nothing to make me what I am."

"Monsieur le Comte," he inquired, "have you any relations?"

"No, sir; I am alone in the world."

"So much the worse."

"Why?" asked Monte-Cristo.

"Because then you might witness a spectacle calculated to break down your pride. You say you fear nothing but death?"

"I did not say that I feared it; I only said that that alone could check me."

"And old age?"

"My end will be achieved before I grow old."

"And madness?"

"I have been nearly mad; and you know the axiom—*non bis in idem.* It is an axiom of criminal law, and, consequently, you understand its full application."

"Sir," continued Villefort, "there is something to fear besides death, old age, and madness. For instance, there is apoplexy—that lightning-stroke which strikes but does not destroy you, and yet after which all is ended. Come, if so you will, M. le Comte, and continue this conversation at my house any day you may be

willing to see an adversary capable of understanding and anxious to refute you, and I will show you my father, M. Noirtier de Villefort, one of the most fiery Jacobins of the French Revolution; in fact, a man who, like you, believed himself one of the envoys—not of God, but of a Supreme Being; not of Providence, but of Fate. Well, sir, the rupture of a blood-vessel in a lobe of the brain has destroyed all this—not in a day, not in an hour, but in a second. M. Noirtier, who on the previous night was the old Jacobin, the old senator, the old Carbonaro, laughing at the guillotine, laughing at the cannon, laughing at the dagger; M. Noirtier, so redoubted, was the next morning *poor M. Noirtier*, the helpless old man, at the tender mercies of the weakest creature in the household—that is, his grandchild Valentine; a dumb and frozen carcase, in fact, who only lives without suffering that time may be given to his frame to decompose without his consciousness of his decay."

"Alas, sir!" said Monte-Cristo, "this spectacle is neither strange to my eye nor my thought. I am something of a physician, and have, like my fellows, sought more than once for the soul in living and in dead matter; yet, like Providence, it has remained invisible to my eyes, although present to my heart. I will call on you, sir, since you bid me contemplate, for the advantage of my pride, this terrible spectacle, which must have spread so much sorrow throughout your house."

"It would have done so unquestionably had not God given me so large a compensation. In presence of the old man, who is dragging his way to the tomb, are two children just entering into life—Valentine, the daughter by my first wife, Mademoiselle Renée de Saint-Méran, and Edward, the boy whose life you have this day saved."

"And what is your deduction from this compensation, sir?" inquired Monte-Cristo.

"My deduction is," replied Villefort, "that my father, led away by his passions, has committed some

fault unknown to human justice, but marked by the justice of God. That God, desirous in His mercy to punish but one person, has visited this justice on him alone."

Monte-Cristo, with a smile on his lips, had yet a groan at his heart which would have made Villefort fly had he but heard it.

"Adieu, sir," said the magistrate, who had risen from his seat. "I leave you, bearing a remembrance of you, a remembrance of esteem, which I hope will not be disagreeable to you when you know me better; for I am not a man to bore my friends, as you will learn. Besides, you have made an eternal friend of Madame de Villefort."

The count bowed, and contented himself with seeing Villefort to the door of his cabinet, the procureur being escorted to his carriage by two footmen, who, on a signal from their master, followed him with every mark of attention. When he had gone, Monte-Cristo drew a hard breath from his oppressed bosom, and said,—

"Enough of this poison; let me now seek the antidote." Then sounding his bell, he said to Ali, who entered, "I am going to madame's chamber—have the carriage ready at one o'clock."

CHAPTER XLIX.

HAYDÉE.

It will be recollected that the new—or rather old—acquaintances of the Count of Monte-Cristo residing in the Rue Meslay were no other than Maximilian, Julie, and Emmanuel.

The very anticipation of delight to be enjoyed in his forthcoming visits—the bright, pure gleam of heavenly happiness it diffused over the almost deadly warfare in

which he had voluntarily engaged, illumined his whole countenance with a look of ineffable joy and calmness, as, immediately after the departure of Villefort, his thoughts flew back to the cheering prospect before him of tasting, at least, a brief respite from the fierce and stormy passions of his mind. Even Ali, who had hastened to obey the count's summons, went forth from his master's presence in charmed amazement at the unusual animation and pleasure depicted on features ordinarily so stern and cold; while, as though dreading to put to flight the agreeable ideas hovering over his patron's meditations, whatever they were, the faithful Nubian walked on tiptoe towards the door, holding his breath lest its faintest sound should dissipate his master's happy reverie.

It was the hour of noon, and Monte-Cristo had set apart one hour to be passed in the apartments of Haydée; as though his so-long-crushed spirit could not all at once admit the feeling of pure and unmixed joy, but required a gradual succession of calm and gentle emotions to prepare his mind to receive full and perfect happiness, in the same manner as ordinary natures demand to be inured by degrees to the reception of strong or violent sensations.

The young Greek, as we have already stated, occupied apartments wholly unconnected with those of the count. The rooms had been fitted up in strict accordance with the Eastern style—that is to say, the floors were covered with the richest carpets Turkey could produce; the walls hung with brocaded silk of the most magnificent designs and texture; while around each chamber luxurious divans were placed, with piles of soft and yielding cushions, that needed only to be arranged at the pleasure or convenience of such as sought repose.

Haydée's female establishment consisted of three French attendants, and a fourth who was, like herself, a native of the climes of Greece. The three first remained constantly in a small waiting-room, ready to

obey the first sound of a small golden bell, or to receive the orders of the Romaic slave, who just knew sufficient French to be enabled to transmit her mistress's orders to the three other waiting-women, who had received most peremptory instructions from Monte-Cristo to treat Haydée with all the respect and deference they would observe to a queen.

The fair Greek herself generally passed her time in the apartment forming the extremity of the suite of rooms assigned to her. It was a species of boudoir, circular, and lighted only from the top, which consisted of pale pink glass. Haydée was reclining upon soft downy cushions, covered with blue satin spotted with silver; her head, supported by one of her exquisitely moulded arms, rested on the divan immediately behind her, while the other was employed in adjusting to her lips the coral tube of a rich narghile, whose flexible pipe, placed amid the coolest and most fragrant essences, permitted not the perfumed vapour to ascend until fully impregnated with the rich odours of the most delicious flowers. Her attitude, though perfectly natural for an Eastern female, would have been deemed too full of coquettish straining after effect in a European. Her dress, which was that of the women of Epirus, displayed feet so exquisitely formed and so delicately fair that they might well have been taken for Parian marble, had not the eye been undeceived by their constantly shifting in and out of the fairy-like slippers in which they were encased.

The extreme beauty of the countenance, that shone forth in loveliness that mocked the vain attempts of dress to augment it, was peculiarly and purely Grecian; there were the large, dark, melting eyes, the finely-formed nose, the coral lips, and pearly teeth that belonged to her race and country. And to complete the whole, Haydée was in the very springtide and fullness of youthful charms—she had not yet numbered more than eighteen summers.

Upon Monte-Cristo entering the apartments of the

fair girl, he summoned her Greek attendant, and bade her inquire whether it would be agreeable to her mistress to receive his visit.

Haydée's only reply was to direct her servant by a sign to withdraw the tapestried curtain that hung before the door of her boudoir, the framework of the opening thus made serving as a sort of border to the graceful tableau presented by the picturesque attitude and appearance of Haydée.

As Monte-Cristo approached, she leaned upon the elbow of the arm that held the narghile, and extending to him her other hand, said, with a smile of captivating sweetness, in the sonorous language spoken by the females of Athens and Sparta, "Why demand permission ere you enter? Are you no longer my master; or have I ceased to be your slave?"

Monte-Cristo returned her smile. "Haydée," said he, "you well know."

"Why do you address me so coldly—so distantly?" asked the fair Greek. "Have I by any means displeased you? Oh, if so, punish me as you will; but do not—do not speak to me in tones and manner so formal and constrained!"

"Listen to me, Haydée," replied the count. "I was about to remind you of a circumstance you are perfectly acquainted with—namely, that we are now in France, and that you are consequently free."

"Free!" repeated the fair girl. "Of what use would freedom be to me?"

"It would enable you to quit me."

"Quit you! Wherefore should I do so?"

"That is not for me to say; but we are now about to mix in society—to visit and be visited."

"I desire to see no one but yourself."

"Nay, but hear me, Haydée. You cannot remain in seclusion in the midst of this gay capital; and should you see one whom you could prefer, think not I would be so selfish or unjust as to——"

"No, no!" answered Haydée with energetic warmth, "that can never be. No man could appear charming in my eyes but yourself. None save yourself and my father have ever possessed my affection; nor will it be bestowed upon any other."

"My poor child!" replied Monte-Cristo, "that is merely because your father and myself are the only men with whom you have ever conversed."

"And what care I for all others in the world? My father called me *his joy*; you style me your *love*—and both of you bestowed on me the endearing appellation of *your child!*"

"Do you remember your father, Haydée?"

The young Greek smiled. "He is here, and here," said she, touching her eyes and her heart.

"And where am I?" inquired Monte-Cristo, laughingly.

"You!" cried she, with tones of thrilling tenderness, "you are everywhere!"

Monte-Cristo took the delicate hand of the young girl in his, and was about to raise it to his lips, when the simple child of nature hastily withdrew it, and presented her fair cheek instead.

"You now understand, Haydée," said the count, "that from this moment you are absolutely free—that here you exercise unlimited sway, and are at liberty to lay aside or continue the costume of your country, as it may suit your inclination. Within this mansion you are absolute mistress of your actions, and may go abroad or remain in your apartments as may seem most agreeable to you. A carriage waits your orders, and Ali and Myrta will accompany you whithersoever you desire to go. There is but one favour I would entreat of you."

"Oh, speak!"

"Preserve most carefully the secret of your birth. Make no allusion to the past, nor upon any occasion be induced to pronounce the names of your illustrious father or ill-fated mother."

"I have already told my lord it is not my intention to hold converse with any one save himself."

"It is possible, Haydée, that so perfect a seclusion, though conformable with the habits and customs of the East, may not be practicable in Paris. Endeavour, then, to accustom yourself to our manner of living in these northern climes, as you did to those of Rome, Florence, Milan, and Madrid. It may be useful to you one of these days, whether you remain here or return to the East."

The fair girl raised her tearful eyes towards Monte-Cristo as she said, with touching earnestness, "My lord would mean whether *we* return to the East or continue here, would he not?"

"My child," returned Monte-Cristo, "you know full well that whenever we part it will be by no fault or wish of mine. The tree forsakes not the blossom that embellishes it; it is the flower that falls from the tree on which it grew."

"My lord," replied Haydée, "never will I quit you; for sure I am I could not exist if banished your presence. Alas! what would life be worth then?"

"My poor girl, you forget that ten years will effect an essentially different change in both of us; to you that space of time will bring but the perfection of womanly graces, while it will wrinkle my brows and change my hair to gray."

"My father had numbered sixty years, and the snows of age were on his head, but I admired and loved him far better than all the gay, handsome youths I saw about his court."

"Then tell me, Haydée, do you believe you shall be able to accustom yourself to our present mode of life?"

"Shall I see you?"

"Every day."

"Then what does my lord apprehend for me?"

"I fear your growing weary."

"Nay, my lord! that cannot be. In the morning I

shall rejoice in the prospect of your coming, and in the evening dwell with delight on the happiness I have enjoyed in your presence. Then, too, when alone, I can call forth mighty pictures of the past, see vast horizons bounded only by the towering mountains of Pindus and Olympus. Oh, believe me that when three great passions, such as sorrow, love, and gratitude, fill the heart, ennui can find no place."

"You are a worthy daughter of Epirus, Haydée, and your charming and poetical ideas prove well your descent from that race of goddesses who claim your country as their birthplace. Depend on my care, to see that your youth is not blighted or suffered to pass away in ungenial solitude; and of this be well assured, that if you love me as a father, I, in my turn, feel for you all the affection of the fondest parent."

"Let not my lord be deceived. The love I bear you resembles in no degree my feelings towards my father. I survived *his* death; but were any evil to befall you, the moment in which I learned the fatal tidings would be the last of my life."

The count, with a look of indescribable tenderness, extended his hand to the animated speaker, who carried it reverentially and affectionately to her lips. Monte-Cristo thus soothed and calmed into a befitting state of mind to pay his visit to the Morrels, departed, murmuring as he went these lines of Pindar: "Youth is a flower of which love is the fruit; happy is he, who after having watched its silent growth, is permitted to gather and call it his own."

The carriage was prepared according to orders, and stepping lightly into it, the count drove off at his usual rapid pace.

CHAPTER L.

THE MORREL FAMILY.

In a very few minutes the count reached No. 7 in the Rue Meslay. The house was of white stone, and in a small court before it were two small beds full of beautiful flowers. In the concierge that opened the gate the count recognized Coclès; but as he had but one eye, and that eye had considerably weakened in the course of nine years, Coclès did not so readily recognize the count.

The breakfast-room was of oak; the salon of mahogany and blue velvet; the bedroom of citron-wood and green damask; there was a study for Emmanuel, who never studied, and a music-room for Julie, who never played. The whole of the second story was set apart for Maximilian. It was precisely the same as his sister's apartments, except that the breakfast parlour was changed into a billiard-room, where he received his friends. He was superintending the dressing of his horse and smoking a cigar at the entrance to the garden when the count's carriage stopped at the door.

Coclès opened the gate, and Baptistin, springing from the box, inquired whether Monsieur and Madame Herbault and Monsieur Maximilian Morrel would see M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo.

"M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo?" cried Morrel, throwing away his cigar and hastening to the carriage; "I should think we would see him. Ah! a thousand thanks, M. le Comte, for not having forgotten your promise."

And the young officer shook the count's hand so warmly that the latter could not be mistaken as to the sincerity of his joy, and saw that he had been expected with impatience, and was received with pleasure.

"Come, come!" said Maximilian; "I will serve as your guide; such a man as you are ought not to be introduced by a servant. My sister is in the garden, plucking

the dead roses; my brother reading his two papers, *La Presse* and *Les Débats* within five steps of her, for wherever you see Madame Herbault you have only to look within a circle of four yards and you will find M. Emmanuel, and 'reciprocally,' as they say at the Ecole Polytechnique."

At the sound of their steps, a young woman of twenty to five-and-twenty, dressed in a silk robe de chambre, and busily engaged plucking the dead leaves off a splendid rose-tree, raised her head.

This female was Julie, who had become, as the clerk of Thomson and French had predicted, Madame Emmanuel Herbault.

She uttered a cry of surprise at the sight of a stranger, and Maximilian began to laugh.

"Don't disturb yourself, Julie," said he. "M. le Comte has only been two or three days in Paris, but he already knows what a woman of fashion of the Marais is, and if he does not, you will show him."

"Ah, monsieur," returned Julie, "it is treason in my brother to bring you thus; but he never has any regard for his poor sister.—Penelon! Penelon!"

An old man who was digging busily at one of the beds of roses, stuck his spade in the earth, and approached cap in hand, and striving to conceal a quid of tobacco he had just thrust into his cheek. A few locks of gray mingled with his hair, which was still thick and matted, whilst his bronzed features and determined glance announced the old sailor who had braved the heat of the equator and the storms of the tropics.

"I think you hailed me, Mademoiselle Julie?" said he.

Penelon had still preserved the habit of calling his master's daughter "Mademoiselle Julie," and had never been able to change the name to Madame Herbault.

"Penelon," replied Julie, "go and inform M. Emmanuel of this gentleman's visit, and Maximilian will conduct him to the salon."

Then, turning to Monte-Cristo,—

"I hope you will permit me to leave you for a few minutes," continued she; and without awaiting any reply, disappeared behind a clump of trees, and entered the house by a lateral alley.

"I am sorry to see," observed Monte-Cristo to Morrel, "that I cause no small disturbance in your house."

"Look there," said Maximilian laughing; "there is her husband changing his jacket for a coat. I assure you you are well known in the Rue Meslay."

"Your family appears to me a very happy one," said the count, as if speaking to himself.

"Oh, yes, I assure you, M. le Comte, they want nothing that can render them happy. They are young and cheerful; they are tenderly attached to each other; and with twenty-five thousand francs a year they fancy themselves as rich as Rothschild."

"Five-and-twenty thousand francs is not a large sum, however," replied Monte-Cristo, with a tone so sweet and gentle that it went to Maximilian's heart like the voice of a father. "They will not be content with that. Your brother-in-law is a barrister?—a doctor?"

"He was a merchant, M. le Comte, and had succeeded to the business of my poor father. M. Morrel, at his death, left 500,000 francs (£20,000), which were divided between my sister and myself, for we were his only children. Her husband, who, when he married her, had no other patrimony than his noble probity, his first-rate ability, and his spotless reputation, wished to possess as much as his wife. He laboured and toiled until he had amassed 250,000 francs; six years sufficed to achieve this object. Oh, I assure you, M. le Comte, it was a touching spectacle to see these young creatures, destined by their talents for higher stations, toiling together, and who, unwilling to change any of the customs of their paternal house, took six years to accomplish that which innovators would have effected in two or three. Marseilles resounded with their well-earned praises. At last,

one day, Emmanuel came to his wife, who had just finished making up the accounts.

"'Julie,' said he to her, 'Coclès has just given me the last rouleau of a hundred francs; that completes the 250,000 francs we had fixed as the limits of our gains. Can you content yourself with the small fortune which we shall possess for the future? Listen to me. Our house transacts business to the amount of a million a year, from which we derive an income of 40,000 francs. We can dispose of the business, if we please, in an hour; for I have received a letter from M. Delaunay, in which he offers to purchase the goodwill of the house, to unite with his own, for 300,000 francs. Advise me what I had better do.'

"'Emmanuel,' returned my sister, 'the house of Morrel can only be carried on by a Morrel. Is it not worth 300,000 francs to save our father's name from the chances of evil fortune and failure?'

"'I thought so,' replied Emmanuel; 'but I wished to have your advice.'

"'This is my counsel: Our accounts are made up and our bills paid; all we have to do is to stop the issue of any more, and close our office.'

"This was done instantly. It was three o'clock; at a quarter past a merchant presented himself to insure two ships; it was a clear profit of 15,000 francs.

"'Monsieur,' said Emmanuel, 'have the goodness to address yourself to M. Delaunay. We have quitted business.'

"'How long?' inquired the astonished merchant.

"'A quarter of an hour,' was the reply.

"And this is the reason, monsieur," continued Maximilian, "of my sister and brother-in-law having only 25,000 francs a year."

Maximilian had scarcely finished his story, during which the count's heart had seemed ready to burst, when Emmanuel entered, clad in a hat and coat. He saluted the count with the air of a man who is aware

of the rank of his guest; then, after having led Monte-Cristo round the little garden, he returned to the house.

A large vase of Japanese porcelain, filled with flowers that impregnated the air with their perfume, stood in the salon. Julie, suitably dressed, and her hair arranged (she had accomplished this feat in less than ten minutes), received the count on his entrance.

The count had felt, from the moment he entered the house, the influence of this happiness, and he remained silent and pensive, forgetting that he was expected to recommence the conversation, which had ceased after the first salutations had been exchanged. He perceived the pause, and, by a violent effort, tearing himself from his pleasing reverie,—

"Madame," said he at length, "I pray you to excuse my emotion, which must astonish you who are only accustomed to the happiness I meet here; but satisfaction is so new a sight to me that I could never be weary of looking at yourself and your husband."

"We are very happy, monsieur," replied Julie; "but we have also known unhappiness, and few have ever undergone more bitter sufferings than ourselves."

The count's features displayed an expression of the most intense curiosity.

"Oh, all this is a family history, as Château-Renaud told you the other day," observed Maximilian. "This humble picture would have but little interest for you, accustomed as you are to behold the pleasures and the misfortunes of the wealthy and illustrious; but such as we are, we have experienced bitter sorrows."

"And God has poured balm into your wounds, as He does to all those who are in affliction?" said Monte-Cristo inquiringly.

"Yes, M. le Comte," returned Julie, "we may indeed say He has; for He has done for us what He grants only to His chosen—He sent us one of His angels."

The count's cheeks became scarlet, and he coughed in

order to have an excuse for putting his handkerchief to his mouth.

"Those born to wealth, and who have the means of gratifying every wish," said Emmanuel, "know not what is the real happiness of life, just as those who have been tossed on the stormy waters of the ocean on a few frail planks can alone estimate the value of a clear and serene sky."

Monte-Cristo rose, and, without making any answer (for the tremulousness of his voice would have betrayed his emotion), walked up and down the apartment with a slow step.

"Our magnificence makes you smile, M. le Comte?" said Maximilian, who had followed him with his eyes.

"No, no," returned Monte-Cristo, pale as death, pressing one hand on his heart to still its throbbings, whilst with the other he pointed to a crystal cover, beneath which a silken purse lay on a black velvet cushion. "I was wondering what could be the use of this purse, which contains a paper at one end and at the other a large diamond."

"M. le Comte," replied Maximilian, with an air of gravity, "those are our most precious family treasures."

"The stone seems very brilliant," answered the count.

"Oh, my brother does not allude to its value, although it has been estimated at 100,000 francs (£4,000); he means that the articles contained in this purse are the relics of the angel I spoke of just now."

"This I do not comprehend; and yet I may not ask for an explanation, madame," replied Monte-Cristo, bowing. "Pardon me, I had no intention of committing an indiscretion."

"Indiscretion! Oh, you make us happy by giving us an occasion of expatiating on this subject. Did we intend to conceal the noble action this purse commemorates we should not expose it thus. Oh, would we

could relate it everywhere, and to every one, so that the emotion of our unknown benefactor might reveal his presence."

"Ah, really," said Monte-Cristo in a half-stifled voice.

"Monsieur," returned Maximilian, raising the glass cover and respectfully kissing the silken purse, "this has touched the hand of a man who saved my father from suicide, us from ruin, and our name from shame and disgrace—a man by whose matchless benevolence we, poor children, doomed to want and wretchedness, can at present hear every one envying our happy lot. This letter" (as he spoke Maximilian drew a letter from the purse and gave it to the count)—"this letter was written by him the day that my father had taken a desperate resolution, and this diamond was given by the generous unknown to my sister as her dowry."

Monte-Cristo opened the letter, and read it with an indescribable feeling of delight. It was the letter written (as our readers know) to Julie, and signed "Sinbad the Sailor."

"Unknown, you say, is the man who rendered you this service unknown to you?"

"Yes; we have never had the happiness of pressing his hand," continued Maximilian. "We have supplicated Heaven in vain to grant us this favour, but all the affair has had a mysterious direction we cannot comprehend; all has been guided by a hand invisible but powerful as that of an enchanter."

"Oh," cried Julie, "I have not lost all hope of some day kissing that hand; as I now kiss the purse which he has touched. Four years ago Penelon was at Trieste—Penelon, M. le Comte, is the old sailor you saw in the garden, and who, from quartermaster has become gardener—Penelon, when he was at Trieste, saw on the quay an Englishman who was on the point of embarking on board a yacht, and he recognized him as the person who called on my father on the fifth of June 1829, and who wrote me this letter on the fifth of September. He

felt quite convinced of his identity, but he did not venture to address him."

"An Englishman!" said Monte-Cristo, who grew uneasy at the attention with which Julie looked at him. "An Englishman, you say?"

"Yes," replied Maximilian, "an Englishman, who represented himself as the confidential clerk of the house of Thomson and French at Rome. It was this that made me start when you said the other day, at M. de Morcerf's, that Messrs. Thomson and French were your bankers. That happened, as I told you, in 1829. For God's sake, tell me, did you know this Englishman?"

"But you tell me also that the house of Thomson and French has constantly denied having rendered you this service?"

"Yes."

"Then is it not probable that this Englishman may be some one who, grateful for a kindness your father had shown him, and which he himself had forgotten, has taken this method of requiting the obligation?"

"Everything is possible on such an occasion—even a miracle."

"What was his name?" asked Monte-Cristo.

"He gave no other name," answered Julie, looking earnestly at the count, "than that at the end of this letter—'Sinbad the Sailor.'"

"Which is evidently not his real name, but a fictitious one."

Then, noticing that Julie was struck with the sound of his voice,—

"Tell me," continued he, "was he not about my height, perhaps a little taller; his chin imprisoned, to use the word, in a high cravat; his coat closely buttoned up; and constantly taking out his pencil?"

"Oh, do you, then, know him?" cried Julie, whose eyes sparkled with joy.

"No," returned Monte-Cristo; "I only guessed. I

knew a Lord Wilmore who was constantly doing actions of this kind."

"Without revealing himself?"

"He was an eccentric being, and did not believe in the existence of gratitude."

"O Heaven!" exclaimed Julie, clasping her hands. "In what did he believe, then?"

"He did not credit it at the period when I knew him," said Monte-Cristo, touched to the heart by the accent of Julie's voice; "but, perhaps, since then he has had proofs that gratitude does exist."

"And do you know this gentleman, monsieur?" inquired Emmanuel.

"Oh, if you do know him," cried Julie, "can you tell us where he is, where we can find him? Maximilian—Emmanuel—if we do but discover him, he must believe in the gratitude of the heart?"

Monte-Cristo felt tears start into his eyes, and he again walked hastily up and down the room.

"In the name of Heaven," said Maximilian, "if you know anything of him, tell us what it is."

"Alas!" replied Monte-Cristo, striving to repress his emotion, "if Lord Wilmore was your unknown benefactor, I fear you will never again see him. I parted from him two years ago at Palermo, and he was then on the point of setting out for the most remote regions, so that I fear he will never return."

"O monsieur, this is cruel of you," said Julie, much affected, and the young lady's eyes swam with tears.

"Madame," replied Monte-Cristo gravely, and gazing earnestly on the two liquid pearls that trickled down Julie's cheeks, "had Lord Wilmore seen what I now see he would become attached to life, for the tears you shed would reconcile him to mankind," and he held out his hand to Julie, who gave him hers, carried away by the look and accent of the count.

"But," continued she, "Lord Wilmore had a family

or friends. He must have known some one. Can we not——"

"Oh, it is useless to inquire," returned the count. "He was not the man you seek for. He was my friend; he had no secrets from me, and he would have confided this also to me."

"And he told you nothing?"

"Not a word."

"And yet you instantly named him."

"Ah, in such a case one supposes——"

"Sister, sister," said Maximilian, coming to the count's aid, "monsieur is quite right. Recollect what our excellent father so often told us, 'It was no Englishman that thus saved us.'"

Monte-Cristo started.

"What did your father tell you, M. Morrel?" said he eagerly.

"My father thought that this action had been miraculously performed; he believed that a benefactor had arisen from the grave to save us. Oh, it was a touching superstition, monsieur; and although I did not myself believe it, I would not for the world have destroyed my father's faith in it. How often did he muse over it and pronounce the name of a dear friend—a friend lost to him for ever. And on his death-bed, when the near approach of eternity seemed to have illumined his mind with supernatural light, this thought, which had until then been but a doubt, became a conviction, and his last words were, 'Maximilian, it was Edmond Dantès!'"

At these words the count's paleness, which had for some time been increasing, became alarming. He could not speak; he looked at his watch like a man who has forgotten the time, said a few hurried words to Madame Herbault, and pressing the hands of Emmanuel and Maximilian,—

"Madame," said he, "I trust you will allow me to visit you from time to time. I value your friendship, and feel grateful to you for your welcome, for this is

the first time for many years that I have thus yielded to my feelings ;" and he hastily quitted the apartment.

"This Count of Monte-Cristo is a singular man," said Emmanuel.

"Yes," answered Maximilian ; "but I feel sure he has an excellent heart, and that he likes us."

"His voice went to my heart," observed Julie, "and two or three times I fancied I had heard it before."

END OF VOLUME I.